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THE QUEST FOR POLAR TREASURES

BY JAN WELZL

Thirty Years in the Golden North

"Marvellously interesting narrative. . . . Few more interesting records of travel have been published for a long time." —*Sunday Times*

"A story not of exploration but residence. . . . He describes with a simplicity that is convincing and breathlessly exciting the lives of Esquimaux and rare traders."—*The Spectator*

"A very good specimen indeed of the travel and adventure book of the unlettered man, the human document. . . . It is easily the best of its kind I have met with for a long time. Old Jan Welzl is good company and a tonic."—J. B. PRIESTLEY in the *Evening Standard*

"Welzl must be one of the most extraordinary men alive in the world to-day. . . . The book is an adventure to read—as all the best adventure books are."—*Country Life*

"Here is adventure on the heroic model: the book fascinates from the first page to the last."—*Observer*

"This is probably one of the most remarkable stories of Arctic adventure ever penned."—*Aberdeen Press and Journal*

"Reads in many places like the handiwork of a modern Defoe. . . . Jan's story certainly has the authentic ring throughout."—*Truth*

"A remarkable record of personal adventure, for the most part solitary, and often under conditions of extreme hardship."—*Discovery*

"Breath-taking . . . enthralling."—*Time and Tide*

JAN WELZL

THE QUEST FOR POLAR TREASURES

With an Introduction
by
BEDŘICH GOLOMBEK & EDVARD VALENTA

Translated by
M. & R. WEATHERALL

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INTRODUCTION

The epic of Welzl's Polar adventures, which forms the content of the two books, *Thirty Years in the Golden North* and *The Quest for Polar Treasures*, has roused considerable interest and discussion. Some critics have asserted that it is another case of clever imposture, while others, with expert knowledge, have confirmed every statement that Welzl made.

Once more we must repeat that Jan Welzl is a simple and uneducated man. He cannot make any use of maps, and he has no knowledge of Natural History. He does not know the proper name of a single animal, he merely calls them by the names they have in some particular locality. When we were in doubt about the identity of the animal concerned we could have referred to standard books in Zoology, but we were afraid to spoil the charm of this man's simple story and its atmosphere of genuine authenticity. We have made no use of our own knowledge, or that of the experts whom we consulted, to verify his statements, for we never doubted his veracity, but to confirm the acute powers of observation of this inhabitant of the North.

For the benefit of those who cannot believe that just an ordinary man could live through, and describe, so many novel experiences, in such an astonishing manner, we must again explain that the origin of this book was the same as that of *Thirty Years in the Golden North*. The story of this volume, taken down in shorthand, as Jan Welzl told it to us, was not at first con-

tinuous. He spoke now of this man, now of that; the various episodes, as given to us, were quite disjointed, and were arranged and expanded weeks and weeks later by answers to the questions which we put to him. It was a big cross-examination, going on for something like eight hours a day, and lasting for two months. We often returned to some point as many as ten different times, with long intervals between. He could not "drop the rein of his phantasy." He had to stick to reality, for he was faced with two critical investigators, who again and again confronted him with what he had said, perhaps days or weeks before.

Some parts certainly are incredible, but we do not think that a single word is deliberately false.

As a further testimony to Welzl's veracity perhaps we may mention a small incident which took place at Věstonice, a spot not far from Brno, the town where this book was written, where some important prehistoric remains have been discovered. Among the many implements that have been unearthed at Věstonice there was a piece of mammoth bone for which none of the archæologists could imagine a use. They called it the Marshal's baton, because they thought it might have been a sign of leadership.

It would take too long to give an account of the connection between the Eskimos and prehistoric man driven south by the Ice Age, a connection on which many scientific papers will still be written, which, nevertheless, helped to confirm Welzl's story; for when he saw the tools dug out at Věstonice he exclaimed: "Jesus Maria, these are the tools of our

backward Eskimos," and when the Marshal's baton was shown to him he was very astonished: "So you have got even this here." The people were amazed when on being asked the Polar trader at once explained that that piece of bone was a simple tool for straightening reindeer antlers. It was a striking proof that he was a man who knew something of which even the experts had not heard. It showed how unique was the experience of this keen observer from the North, whose first-hand knowledge surpassed that of many travellers, to whose superficial views he always had a condescending aversion.

We consider ourselves fortunate in having discovered this unusual man, and in being able to put in permanent form the record of his experiences, when they might have been lost for ever.

BEDŘICH GOLOMBEK
EDVARD VALENTA

BRNO

THE QUEST FOR POLAR TREASURES

I

GOLD-FEVER

WILL "LAURA" BE MINE?

In my first book, *Thirty Years in the Golden North*, I explained how I went from Irkutsk through the forests and waste lands of Siberia to the Arctic Ocean, how I became an inhabitant of New Siberia, and the companion of a few Polar hermits and Eskimo families; and how, after years and years of dreadful suffering and privation, from a simple locksmith, sailor and tramp, I became a hunter of note and an established trader; proprietor of a splendid boat and the chief judge of New Siberia. *Laura*, my boat, was, of course, not entirely mine. I only gave her bankrupt Captain Erickson furs worth a hundred thousand dollars, while my companion, Captain MacDonald, gave a quarter of a million, and Emerson, Oerell, and Yankee made up the rest between them.

But with all that I had not yet reached the goal of my life. Oh no. Instead, I said to myself, that I was still at the very beginning, for, so far, all the dreadful sweat of my Polar life had had no sense: now my goal was clear: "LAURA" MUST BE ENTIRELY MINE. One day I must be able to mount the bridge, look down on the deck, and to say to myself, that not one

plank, one bit of the boiler, or one little scrap of iron belongs to anybody else but me. The time must come when I need not ask anybody whether I should go here or there, whether it would pay, and how much this man or that should get. I should be able to paint her blue, yellow, red or piebald, anything I fancied, without asking anyone. I alone would be master of that boat. From the moment when *Laura* for the first time lay at anchor on the coast of New Siberia, as our property, I said to myself that I would sweat and sweat and sweat to pay my mates everything they had thrown into that business; and that the only partner of Jan Welzl, the son of the Golden North, would be Jan Welzl.

I knew that it would not be soon, that four hundred thousand dollars were an immense fortune, even for the North, where a dollar was often worth less than threepence. For it was just there that every dollar had to be bitterly earned. But at every step I told myself that I must have that big debt paid off as soon as possible; and that gave me such a zest that again and again I went on big expeditions, and looked for more and more business connections in all the corners of the Polar world, wherever possible. It was a wild chase after money, a quest for Polar treasures.

It is true that long before we had *Laura* I used to travel looking for signs of treasures; in fact it was mainly through digging for these treasures that I got hold of the first bit of capital that I could put up as my share in *Laura*. Early in the first years of my sojourn in the farthest North I learned to know the terrors

and the glories of the hunt; I knew also something of the gold-fever, and I saw the sad results of that mania; but I have kept my story of hunting in the North, and of the chase after gold, on purpose for this book, for it was only after we had bought *Laura* that I gave myself up seriously to this job and with a fixed aim.

"What are the Polar treasures?"

Gold and furs.

The whole North swarmed with hunters for these treasures. I got to know them right at the beginning of my business career when I first went through Alaska and Northern Canada. Later on I looked into their lives more closely, because I wanted to get money out of them. And so I began to distinguish the life of a gold-digger from that of a hunter, although they are so often mixed, and I remained loyal only to the latter. For this reason I shall talk of gold, and the deadly gold frenzy, mainly as an observer and a listener, but of hunting as a hunter.

Digging for gold is nearly always the same everywhere in the North, but I must divide my hunting expeditions into various groups which were very different from each other: first there were the expeditions into the forests of Northern Canada, then the expeditions to Alaska, and finally the most dangerous, but also the most interesting and famous expeditions in the Arctic Ocean into the zone of eternal ice, far beyond the eightieth degree. In this way I am going to divide them in this book, and with them the account of all my experiences and adventures.

GOLD-DIGGERS' SETTLEMENTS

There are amazing stories current in the world of the fabulous riches which gold-diggers brought back from Alaska, particularly in the first years of the gold-fever in the American North. Unfortunately very few of them are true. I know only too well.

Few people brought back with them as much as a quarter of a million dollars. I do not mean that gold is scarce. On the contrary there is gold to be had worth many millions; but wages, machines, food and other things swallow up everything. And so I heard of many gold-diggers who had great luck and yet came back from the North with empty hands. Good Lord! How many I met like that!

In the first place the prices of provisions were enormous. In Alaska and near the Mackenzie, on an average, a pound of sugar cost a dollar, and flour was about the same. An egg was from seven to nine dollars, a pound of butter about twenty-five; a pound of coffee cost more than thirty dollars, a small tin of condensed milk about one, a pound of ham cost five, bacon was about the same. Lard cost up to three dollars, but they mostly used tallow. Fish was cheap; a man could catch any amount of them; a pound cost about two dollars. One had to pay a dollar for a box of matches, and a bottle of whisky cost seventy-five. This was at the beginning when things were at their worst. A gold-digger, especially one who was just beginning, had first to try to shoot some animals and provide himself with food before he could start to dig at all.

How supplies were obtained, how men died in getting them, and the hardships they suffered, would take years and years to explain. Men innumerable died of hunger with heaps of gold within their reach. Getting hold of machinery and transporting it to the diggings also cost piles of gold. What was left, people lost in various ways. Many lost it through drink or women, but still more often at poker. And if, then, a man did not care to start again at the very beginning, he could just shoot himself under the saloon's windows.

A man who wanted to dig gold began as a prospector, looking for a gold-field. He went from one place to another till he came to a spot where he thought he might find something. Then he dug a trial hole, and if he found gold and decided to settle on the spot, and mine, he became a gold-digger. First, of course he had to make arrangements for provisions, so he marked the spot, and then moved perhaps a hundred miles away, did some shopping and again dragged himself with his dogs to the place. He had to make the journey many times again until he had provisions enough to last several months. Then he built a cabin or any old shack, some just made a hole in the ground, and if winter did not set in it once he could begin to dig. Otherwise he hunted and made up his provisions as well as he could. But usually if a prospector found gold, he told his friends in confidence about the place, and they went after him. Usually, news spread like wildfire all through the country that mining had started in such and such a place. Immediately people

flocked there from everywhere, staked claims along the creek and marked out their plots. There was always a great rush, for the first comers got the best claims. Thus a gold-diggers' settlement started. As soon as there were thirty-five people the gold-diggers had the right to choose their own marshal, and he had the same authority as an Eskimo or Red Indian chief had over his tribe. If he discovered anything amiss he could deal with the culprit as he liked. But when the settlement had grown to such an extent that it had over a hundred gold-diggers, a state official, or sheriff, was appointed, and placed in charge, to whom the marshal handed over his duties. Then at a place called the record office everybody had to declare which field was his, give his name and birthplace, and show his papers. In Alaska if they were not in order he had to stop digging at once, and if he were a foreigner, not an American citizen, he was not allowed to dig at all. Of course, under this rule every foreign prospector found for himself an American friend in whose name the field was entered.

To have a chief for the settlement was essential, not only as a matter of law, but of vital interest to the gold-diggers; for besides those who wished to work honestly, gold drew to Alaska crowds of scoundrels and riff-raff from the whole world, and even the honest ones were driven into bad company when hard luck gave them no other choice. A horde of such people wandered through the country, with ears open, touting for information which would tell them where and in what places there was plenty of gold, and few diggers;

then they went there and by fair means or foul they tried to get hold of the metal already dug, or of the gold-bearing land. Often they deceived an inexperienced gold-digger with documents showing that the land had belonged to them for years, or they simply shot him; often they poisoned him with brandy. Then they threw the corpse into a hole which the prospector had once dug out and abandoned, threw a bit of earth on top, and that was all. The crime was concealed for ever. It was just the same in Canada.

THE DAWSON MADNESS

When at the beginning of the present century I first went to Alaska the gold-fever was at its height. Just about that time stories were circulating about a man called Golden Hill who had struck gold worth three million dollars, on a hill in Dawson City. Great riches had been recently got out of the ground in Eldorado, Bonanza and Green Fort. As it happened I was travelling through those places and I saw this madness at close quarters. At that time the supply of provisions was already fairly good, because steamships were running on the Yukon. But two or three years earlier, when crowds of people suddenly rushed to Alaska and when they could pick up lumps of gold like stones, but had nothing to put into their mouths, life, as I have often heard say, was just horrid. You had to pay fifty dollars for a pound of potatoes. Indians and Eskimos were fishing day and night near the settlements to provide for the crowd. And men died from all kinds of

diseases. In Dawson City the cemetery itself is the greatest monument to its glory.

As a matter of fact I reached Dawson just in time to find it still booming. The town lies a bit to the side of the spot where the Klondyke meets the Yukon, and when I arrived machines and boilers were just being brought down the river, and only afterwards did work start in full earnest. In those days one paid labourers twenty-five pounds a day because there was a complete lack of workers if not of field proprietors. They got their food as well. But afterwards wages were steadily cut down, till in the end one paid only five dollars a day and food. At this level they remained. One might think those were excellent wages, but most of the workers only had jobs in summer, and in winter they had to live on their savings; for in winter there was almost nothing to do. Those workers who earned and saved enough went to other places, and looked for gold to dig on their own account. Sometimes they succeeded, often they had to come back, while many independent gold-diggers in their turn went bankrupt and had to go as workers themselves. Sometimes there were rows between the workers and employers which nearly led to bloodshed.

I myself saw what might be the outcome of such misunderstandings. I often travelled past a place where there was a big hole in the ground and water in it. I was puzzled by this and I asked a man who knew the conditions there very well what it was for, and I learned that a gold-digger had been settled there and could not pay his workers. The gold had not been washed

out; all the man had was a big heap of gold sand, and the real harvest had still to begin. But the workers wanted to be paid at once. What was the poor man to do? He had nothing. Among the men who were demanding their wages there was a Russian, and he began to threaten while the employer answered back; they both cursed each other, and then all of a sudden the Russian snatched up a stick of dynamite and threw it on the heap of gold sand. All that was left on the spot was a funnel-shaped hollow twenty yards wide. The ruined proprietor got frightened and ran away. He was completely broken, as I realized at once when I heard the story and saw that hole.

In other places as well there was a good deal of unrest among the workers. Even if they had not been caught by the gold-fever this itself would have driven them into looking for new outcrops of gold. From Dawson a big expedition started, led by an American-German called Muller. This party went along the Yukon sixty miles away from Dawson towards the Alaskan border. It soon became clear that there were great riches in that locality as well. Muller himself dug up heaps of gold: the news spread and people rushed there like mad from all sides. In a short time this settlement, called Sixty Miles, grew to be almost as big as Dawson itself.

And crowds of people kept going there. It was a dreadful scramble, everyone trying to get there before the others. Those who got there late found that all the gold-bearing land had been pegged out: there was not a square inch left, so they went west till they came

to a river which they called the River of Forty Miles. There they started to work and soon found quantities of gold. The news of that find again drove all the men in the country mad, and people chased here and there; nobody knew where to settle, and which land was the best. In the streets you heard people talk only in millions. If a man had fifty cents in his pocket he would assure you that in a month or two he would be a millionaire. You can understand that when a man of sense happened to come into such a bedlam he had to keep his wits about him to avoid being caught by the fever as well, and I was not a bit astonished to see these people who were mostly Greeks, Swedes and Englishmen falling victims to this Dawson madness. Later on it interested me to see what happened to the millions, and I saw that very few had got rich and still fewer managed not to lose their riches stupidly.

THE FIGHT BETWEEN THE ROBBERS AND THE RED INDIANS

Strangely enough, the native Indians were not at that time infected with the Dawson fever, not even when hunters in the Rockies spread among them exaggerated stories of the finds in Dawson.

Not that they were not greedy for gold; and they knew of spots in the mountains where it was lying on the surface. At the time when thousands and thousands of gold-diggers, and of the worst type of adventurers, were coming to the North, the Indians made an agreement between themselves that they would not

tell anybody of the gold in the Rockies, so that the prospectors would not come and chase the animals away on which they were dependent.

At that time so much attention was concentrated on Dawson that the Rockies remained quite unnoticed. Meanwhile the Indians hunted and sold furs, so that they could buy provisions and work after the Dawson example. They also saw that many people easily became rich with gold, while hunting did not pay them very well. The whole summer therefore they kept on prospecting in the mountains of North-eastern Alaska, and they found so much gold that they could not take it with them at once to the banks, and they had to let it lie.

But Red Indians are human beings, just like white men. There is always someone among them who can't keep his mouth shut, and blabs about the rich find. It was just the same then. One of the Indians met a white prospector who was bound for Dawson, and he let out about the find of gold in the Rockies. The white prospector came to Dawson, and under the seal of strict secrecy, he shared the news with some of his friends. But the secret slowly leaked out, until it suddenly appeared in the papers, then it was shouted out all over the country, and another craze had started in Dawson. Everybody talked about the treasures in the Rockies, and about the Indians who were coming with gold to Dawson.

But in the meantime a gang of ruffians collected together and made plans to waylay the Indians, to attack them and steal their gold. This gang moved out

and settled on the tracks leading from Circle City to Fort Yukon. To make it appear less suspicious they hunted there, and sent their spies everywhere to try to find out when the Indians would come. But the Indians were in no hurry. It was already late in autumn, and Christmas was drawing near, when the scouts brought in reports that an Indian expedition with gold was approaching. The gang of thieves, among whom there were many gold-diggers from Dawson, otherwise honest men, who took part in the expedition merely to see if there really was gold in the Rockies, hid in the forest near the Yukon and made their attack so sudden and unexpected that the Indians had to leave on the spot all that they possessed and run for their lives. In this way they were robbed of the rewards of all their long labour, and their weary efforts to drag the gold along were entirely in vain.

But the dispersed Indians met again in the woods, and after long debates they decided that after all they would still go on to Dawson, partly in order to tell the authorities what had happened to them, and partly to find out who had waylaid them. In the meantime the robbers sold their booty. This was not very difficult, for they worked hand-in-glove with the gold-diggers, and with rich men who were not so much interested in the spoil as in the quality of gold and in the places from which it came. The quality of the gold was so extraordinarily good that the bank paid twenty-three dollars an ounce for it. This was the highest price that had ever been paid. The ringleaders therefore secretly organized a company to finish off

the robbery thoroughly, and get at the gold which the Indians had left in the ground or on the surface.

The police then began to take active steps to investigate the crime, but among so many criminals the search was difficult, especially when they were protected by rich and respected men. But there were some honest people in Dawson who explained to the Indians that that robbery was the beginning of a great enterprise which was being prepared for the Rockies, and that they ought to look out. The people who would be moving to the new goldfields would be mostly the robbers themselves or those who knew of the affair before it had happened.

So the Indians left their scouts in Dawson to watch where each expedition went. For a whole year nothing happened, but at last it became public knowledge that a company had been formed to exploit the natural riches in the Rockies. The scoundrels expected that among so many crimes in the North their own would long have been forgotten, and they began to talk openly of their enterprise.

The Indian scouts hurried back to the mountains as fast as they could. Men were called together from all the Indian reservations and scouts were placed on all the tracks. A big expedition of white men moved out making for the Mackenzie. There in the forests the Indians threw themselves upon them and the white men had to withdraw from the Rockies empty-handed. Many were killed there, and still more died through hardships and hunger on the way back. But all who returned were completely ruined, for the

authorities were on the side of the Indians, on account of the wrong which they had suffered the previous year. For a long time after that they searched for the ringleaders of the gang, but as far as I can remember they were never caught. After all, the punishment which the Indians inflicted on the white expedition was dreadful enough, and, in my opinion, the robbery had been fully avenged.

YOUNG LADIES AND THEIR FATE

There were plenty of similar crimes. It could not well be otherwise when all sorts of people were rushing there. And not men only: young ladies went there from almost the whole world. They earned their living by dancing, and when they met a gold-digger they tried to get him into their snares. Even a sensible man had to give them a bit of gold if he danced with them. Among them were pretty Swedish girls; many were French Canadian, but I think most of them were from Paris and its neighbourhood.

The experiences of these girls were very different, but I doubt if any of them came to a good end. It all depended, of course, on the kind of gold-digger the young lady met. Some of them were tough fellows, they took such a lady by the legs, threw her into the river, and let her swim; others thrashed her and kicked her, and when she had stayed with them long enough they threw her out. But there were also good-natured men who had pity on them and gave them plenty of gold.

One very beautiful girl, from France, only eighteen years old, met with a terrible end. She came to Dawson, where she danced in the saloons; later she settled down in Klondyke in a small cottage and there she lived. She worked together with some touts who lounged about Dawson looking for rich gold-diggers whom they brought to the young lady's house. One of them made an acquaintance with a rich French Canadian who had just arrived in Dawson, and the account he gave of the beauties of the young Parisian was so attractive that the Canadian was completely taken in and went to Klondyke. They ate and drank and enjoyed themselves, but suddenly in the evening the Canadian fell fast asleep. When he awoke it was morning, and he found himself in the forest far away from the cottage. His pockets were empty, but he could thank God that it was in summer, otherwise he would have frozen to death. Naturally he did not tell anyone of his disgrace: perhaps he told one or two of his best friends. But after a time another Canadian was treated by the young lady in just the same manner. Again the news spread secretly in whispers until it broke out. This did not take long, and the sheriff made certain that the lady had put the gold-diggers to sleep; as a matter of fact this was usually only for a night, but one she put to sleep for ever. The court did not sit long; near the police station at Dawson a gallows was put up, and the beautiful lady, the first, and as far as I know, the last woman was executed there. For months after, all over the country, they talked of her beauty and of her execution. I did not

see the girl myself because all this happened before I had been in those parts, but many of my friends the hunters knew her well, and they often told me how beautiful she was.

Of course later on I saw myself what havoc those ladies wrought in that land of gold; but after that none of them were executed, they were only put in prison.

A GOLD-FIELD FOR A SWEETHEART

Soon after the Dawson fever had reached its climax news went round that things were booming on the River Stuart, and that very much gold had been found there.

But before women had time to get there from the Dawson saloons, Indian women came to the river and hunted, fished, and moved behind the gold-diggers. They cooked for them, looked after their houses, often stayed with them as wives, wandering from camp to camp, and at least superficially made themselves acquainted with the gold-diggers' work. There was among them a very beautiful Indian girl. I did not see her myself, but all who talked of her, and who knew her, were astonished at her beauty. Since I have heard this story repeated several times by many different people I think this girl really was good-looking. It is very likely, for here and there there were real beauties among the Indian women.

This Indian girl, however, did not take part in any entertainments for the gold-diggers, she did not join up with any party, she cooked for nobody, and she did

not go to live with anyone as wife; for she had a sweetheart, to whom she remained faithful, although he was far away from her, and although he was quite a poor fellow, a simple worker in the gold-fields round Dawson. He was a Slovak by birth, and he came from Pennsylvania. I am sorry I can't remember his name, although it stuck in my head for years.

The Indian girl fished, and kept thinking of her sweetheart, while she looked round for some lonely and quiet spot where she might find gold for him while he was in Dawson. In other places, some distance away, gold was already being mined with great energy, more and more was turning up, and the news spread all over the country. But the places where she searched were still quiet, the animals were not disturbed by dynamite explosions, only here and there was there a mark of a human footprint, but even then it was the track of a hunter, for no gold-digger had set foot in the place.

At last the Indian girl thought she had found a place where her lover could begin to dig: she had only to let him know. This was not such an easy job as it is in the middle of civilization, where one would simply drop a letter into a letter-box; for the girl it meant a long journey lasting many days. After all there is nothing extraordinary in that in a country where people were always on the move and having to make terrific journeys; nor was it considered too difficult, for journeys were always strenuous. The difficulty was that she did not wish her parents and three brothers to know that she had anything to do with a white man.

For that reason she had to wait a long time for an opportunity, and at last she started secretly on her journey to Dawson.

She travelled by boat, found him, and told him that she had found a suitable place for mining near the River Stuart. She described the spot as well as she could, and the Slovak decided that he would have a look at it before the autumn began. The girl returned as quietly as she had come, and the white man began to make his plans for getting to the River Stuart. He could not just set off and go there empty-handed, he needed food and provisions to last several months, he had to have lots of tools, and all that cost very much money. He had a little of his own, but it was not enough. To get more he had to go to his friends, who were also ordinary workers on the Solfer and Eldorado. In strictest confidence he told them what he had just learned, and he made an agreement with them that if they helped him he would go and investigate, and if he found anything he would bring them in, so that each should have his own gold-mine. Of course under these conditions they willingly agreed, and each gave what he could.

The Slovak bought provisions and got on a steamer going up towards White Horse. In this way he got as far as the mouth of the River Stuart. There he made a raft and hauled his equipment up the river.

The Indian girl was anxious to meet her lover. But just then the whole Indian reservation was returning home from a hunting expedition, and she was compelled to stay with them, among whom were her

own relatives. She did this with a heavy heart. But after some time the Indians again moved into the forests, and the girl went with them; when they came to the river she said she would stay there and fish for salmon.

"It's late summer, no time for fishing," they told her.

They were right, but as an excuse the girl said she would catch animals at the same time, laying traps in that part of the country and only fishing in her spare moments. With this the Indians were content, they left her there and moved away. In the meantime the white man was approaching with his raft, until one day he reached the spot. He examined the country; the girl showed him the places where he might find gold, and very soon both set off to get more supplies. The Indian girl helped her lover to tow the raft, so that they could get everything ready before winter set in; they both slaved until they were nearly exhausted, and at last all the food and tools had been brought to the places where the pair expected to find gold.

Now the man started on his cabin. The girl advised him not to settle down near the river, where the gold was, but higher up in the woods, so that her relations would not see him. She was afraid it might rouse a suspicion that she only wanted to stay there because she was waiting for a white man. In that case it was very likely that the Indians would waylay him, and either murder him outright, or mutilate him badly, because they would be afraid that a gold-digger settled in those parts would upset the game with his dynamite.

So the white man carried his things into the forest, and settled down there as a hunter. He had rifles and he hunted. The Indian girl stayed with him in his cabin, but far away from there she kept her tent fixed up ready so that she could hide in it as soon as her tribe showed signs of approaching. In this way they lived together, they both went hunting, and when the Indians returned they found the girl alone in her tent with a catch big enough to make them think she had not wasted her time.

As soon as the Indians had moved away to their homes, without having seen the newcomer, the Slovak started on his job. He dug holes near the river, looking for gold, and found bits here and there, but not very much. By Christmas the ground was frozen so hard that he could not work any longer. He then covered up the diggings he had made, and hunted instead. In the meantime the Indians learned that a new man had settled in the country, but they were not upset when they heard that it was only a hunter. If they had only known that he was the first man who had come to prospect for gold in that region this story might have had a different ending.

The following May, when the earth was sufficiently soft, the gold-digger started again on his job. All the time he kept an eye open for the Indians so as not to be surprised by them; he worked steadily and quietly, and then suddenly he struck plenty of gold. With one spadeful he dug up gold worth thousands and thousands of dollars, in fact the only trouble was that there were too few spades. The vein, which was not very broad,

was only about twenty yards long, and then it ran out completely. The man took the gold, and moved to another spot. But first of all he had to think of his food supplies, which by now had run very short. All he could do was to wash out the gold and set out with it for Dawson to buy more provisions.

But by that time an order had been issued which was very unpopular with the gold-diggers. According to it, everybody who wanted to sell his gold to the bank had to show his documents and state exactly where he had got it. This order had been made after the big robberies had taken place, for even if the Government could not prevent such crimes it could make the sale of the booty more difficult. So the Slovak had to declare that he came from the River Stuart, from such and such a place. The worst of it was that the statements the gold-diggers made in this way were never kept secret. The newspapers which were in touch with the banks even printed these statements in their columns as sensations. So all Dawson soon knew where new outcrops had been found.

In this way the Slovak's friends learned about it very soon, and they were pretty certain that the man they had helped had cheated them in not telling them himself where he had found gold on the Stuart. They began to press him at once, and it took him a long time to persuade them that there was not enough gold to keep several people occupied. In the end they believed him, but they were still very suspicious. Their doubts increased when they saw him getting ready to leave Dawson with provisions and supplies which he had

bought with the gold he had found in the spring. So he got ready, but he had to wait some time for a steamer going his way.

In this way he was waiting at the harbour when to his astonishment he saw his coloured sweetheart. She came with very important news, with a secret that made her so restless that she could not wait until her friend came back. She took him by hand, and told him that her brothers, when returning from the hunt, had told her that in a spot not far from his old diggings they had found a place where there was very much gold.

"You will have very good luck there."

"And where is it?"

"Not far away, just a bit higher up the river."

The gold-digger began to think. He knew that often in Alaska when a mine was betrayed the person who let out the secret lost his life.

He said therefore:

"But what if your brothers see that I am digging the gold which they discovered; what will happen to you then?"

She said she would find out when her brothers were going away, and then he might try to dig.

So it was settled; but these two had embarked on a very risky undertaking, for on the Stuart there was only gold near the river, right on the bank, and so the diggings were visible from all sides, for the river bed lay exposed.

The man set out for the place, and began working there, but this time he did not pretend to be a hunter, he mined for gold as if he were certain that everybody

who came would be allowed to dig. Following the advice of his sweetheart he invited the Indians into his hut and gave them plenty to eat. He wanted to win their favour, and he thought that they might tell him of the gold they had found. Then he would be able to dig for it without a qualm. But the visitors only ate a lot, and didn't say much. They asked the gold-digger whether he had any gold. He said that he had a little, but that he was going further on, and he asked them if they knew of any. They shook their heads, saying that they could not say for certain, because they were hunters and not prospectors.

The time went fast. Day by day the Slovak's friends grew more impatient, till at last they could stand it no longer and they started after their mate. They had been very uneasy ever since the Slovak had sold his gold to the bank, but when they arrived they saw that so far their companion had nothing to speak of. However once they were there, they also decided to stay, and they only went back to Dawson for supplies. They hauled them up, and set to work in different places, and at the same time they hunted to earn something extra in the way of furs.

Then the Indian girl suddenly told her lover that he could begin to work on the rich gold-field, because her brothers had moved away, and would not be back for a long time. But the Slovak did not want to go digging alone, for he was afraid the Indians would find out who had betrayed them. He therefore talked it over with his friends, and sent them to get the gold, which later on they were to divide between them.

The friends immediately tackled the job; they soon struck gold, in fact they went on finding more and more. News of this quickly spread all over the country, and very soon the Indians heard of it as well. They hurried back to see if their own gold-fields were safe. They came to the fields and found the gold-diggers there.

"Have you found anything?" they demanded.

"We've found something, but not very much," they were told.

"And who showed you the place?"

"Showed us—nobody. We prospected ourselves until we hit it here with our spade. We may be on the right spot. Who knows?"

The Indians could not believe in such a lucky chance, and they guessed that most probably their sister had let the secret out; and so they went straight to her tent and asked her if she was intimate with any of the white men. She answered that she had nothing to do with them.

So the trouble quietened down, and it seemed that everything would be all right. But the gold-diggers noticed that the Indians looked on them with ill-feeling, not perhaps because of the gold, but because of the dynamite explosions which in that region could be heard ten miles away. So the white men tried to make plans to avoid a clash, and they hit on a fine idea. They sent news to Dawson that along the river in that district there was a lot of gold. That was enough to cause havoc in Dawson, and soon afterwards they had with them in that dangerous region two hundred gold-

diggers, a force strong enough to check any attack. This was enough to take from the Indians any desire for further trouble.

It looked as if all ill-feeling had been spirited away from the district. There was peace; men lived without fear; they set to work and formed a community. Only two people were afraid of their lives: the Indian girl and her lover, who lived together whenever the Indians were far away, but always had to part as soon as the hunters returned. But at last they were surprised.

The Indians came, looked at them quietly, and moved away without a word.

The girl had her excuse ready, and so she went later to join her relations and her tribe on the Yukon. There her brothers pounced on her and demanded what she was doing in the gold-digger's cabin. She said that she was staying with him as his cook, and that she was getting monthly wages. They did not believe her story, and they declared that she was really his wife, and it was she who had betrayed them. They fell to words, some of the other Indians defended the girl, the two brothers grew angry, at last both parties began to quarrel, and suddenly one brother jumped up and stabbed an Indian who had defended the girl. Then the other went for his sister and killed her. Afterwards they threw the dead bodies into the Yukon.

Some gold-diggers who were travelling up the Yukon fished out one day the dead body of a beautiful Indian girl. They knew immediately that she had been murdered with a knife, and therefore wherever

they went they asked if anybody knew who she was. They discovered that she belonged to the reservation in Selkirk, and when they went there later on they told the prospectors who were looking there for asphalt. These spread the news of the murder through the whole country, so that soon the parents of the unhappy girl heard of it as well, and they informed the sheriff. He sent them to the grave of the murdered girl, she was dug out, and the old Indians recognized their daughter. They began to search for the murderer; and they soon got track of the culprits. It was known that they were her two brothers who had fled into the forest to escape the law. They had wandered for a long time and hidden in the woods until at last they were driven to selling meat to the gold-diggers for a living. They happened to come just to the place where the Slovak was working, but they had no suspicion that they were wanted men. Someone, however, knew of them there.

They were arrested, and after being threatened and tormented for a bit they gave a full account of what had happened on the Yukon. In a moment a jury was called and a few seconds later it had passed sentence that the brothers should be tied with their backs together: two trees were bent down, on each a rope was fixed, and when they flew up again the bodies of the condemned men hung high in the air and the nooses tightened. In this way they hung for a long time on the trees.

DAWSON TOM

But now I must not forget that tiny little man whom I met with several times. No: I must not forget Dawson Tom. Anyone who didn't know Dawson Tom could not say he had been in Alaska, for there was not a greater rascal in the whole country. He came from the States, but I can't remember exactly from which town, I only know that he was from Arkansas, and before he went North he had worked in Texas. What his real name was I don't pretend to know, or anybody else, for nobody cared. Men in the North know each other as a rule only by a nickname, or by a Christian name, which is very rarely the proper one. In the North a man could call himself what he liked, and take his true name with him to the grave. So it was with Dawson Tom.

He was a tiny man, not more than four feet eight, he smiled all the time and never lost his temper, not even when things were at their worst. He had once been a cowboy. I doubt whether anyone could throw a lasso better than he did. He was just as good with a rifle: in fact he could handle a gun better than anyone else in the North, where every man was a good shot. He was equally good at cards. But while at shooting, or with the lasso, a man can't manage always to win, at poker very strange things may happen at times. And here I ought to explain that Dawson Tom not only made good use of his talent, but he often misused it as well: in fact he cheated. Even then he might have been excused if he had not joined gangs of other

professional sharpers, for whom he fixed the cards. But when the victims noticed anything amiss they had to keep their mouths shut pretty tight to stop Tom from putting his more honest art of shooting to more dishonest use.

In a word, he was a rascal. He did nothing, he got his money by cheating. But there were so many swindlers in Alaska that he might easily have been lost in the crowd, and not appeared at all conspicuous, if he had not been an incorrigible drunkard, who, instead of trying to make a living merely used his skill to get a drink.

And now I ought to say that liquor was very dear in the North, and to get really drunk cost large sums of money. Tom managed all right when he was not so well known and was living in the little town called Dyea, which lies in a bay under the Chilcoot Pass. But later when everyone had heard of him, no one would sit down with him to a game, and so he had to move his field of action to Skagway. Even there he could not stay very long. The town was being cleared up, soldiers made the place too hot for rogues, and so one day a big horde of idlers, rascals, swindlers, and adventurers were driven out and moved into Dawson. This town was then at the height of the gold-fever. Here men made money easily, and knew how to spend it: places of amusement were opened, saloons sprang up, thousands of women flocked there from all parts of the world, and a motley troop of touts, sharpers, thieves, robbers and murderers followed. Tom's party joined them.

But Tom was careful. At first he did not make for Dawson itself, he settled on the other side of the river, in the little town Klondyke, which the riff-raff made their headquarters. He mixed with people, here and there he hit on someone who would drink with him, he made friends everywhere, but in particular he was on very friendly terms with the French, Belgian, Italian, American and Canadian girls, who were also drawn to Dawson by a desire to exploit the natural riches of the womb of the earth. These ladies were crazy for Dawson Tom, and they gave him what they could. But whenever Tom looked deeper into the glass he became unpleasant, annoyed them tactlessly, and quickly lost their sympathies. The ladies gradually lost interest in him, chance acquaintances kept their purses tight, and a hard time fell on Dawson Tom. He suffered so cruelly that at last he decided to look for an honest job.

At that time they began to bring to Dawson cattle on the hoof. It occurred to him that he might get a job in the slaughter-house as a drover. He went and asked for the job, but he was so notorious by then that he was not taken on; they recognized him and turned him down. But what was he to do? He realized only too well that this was the best job he could get, and so he made up his mind to get it. He soon found out how to manage it.

Bulls and oxens which before had been perfectly quiet when they were being driven from the harbour to the slaughter-house suddenly began to get very excited; they ran with their tails up through the town,

they bellowed and roared; a panic ensued, frightened people fled from the streets, and the owners of the animals got into great trouble. Who knows what Tom did to the animals? What was certain was that he understood cattle very well, and that he was always somewhere around when the droves got excited. When in the end the butchers were at their wits' end, Tom again appeared and said he would put everything into order, and promised that he would always get the animals from the harbour without any trouble. They were only too willing to let him have the job, they even provided him with a horse. So Dawson Tom rode two horses at the same time. From the moment that he got on the horse, the cattle were like lambs, all trouble with the animals vanished, and everybody praised Tom, not suspecting what lay behind.

However, their eyes were opened one day when he was not in charge. There was a terrible uproar. To show his importance he had handed over to another employee the job which he had managed so successfully. But by then they had nearly had enough of Tom in the slaughter-houses; but because it was autumn and the import of cattle was nearly over for the year, they let him stay at his job. As soon, however, as the season was over they gave him the sack.

Again he was down and out. Once again he lounged about; again for days he could not get a drop of brandy, and he walked about until he could stand it no longer. Then one day he entered a saloon with a swagger; he approached the bar and asked for brandy:

"Can you pay for it?" asked the barman.

"No, I can't."

"Well, you'll get no brandy!"

"It's true I have no money, but I have some dynamite!" And Dawson Tom pulled out a big stick of dynamite, with a fuse, and struck a match. The fuse crackled, and Tom shouted:

"Closing time, gentlemen, the pub is going up!"

At a glance the gold-diggers understood; they knew what a stick of dynamite could do. They realized at once the danger they were in; the gamblers threw their cards on the table, those who drank threw their glasses on the floor, those who gossiped held their breath, and with a shout they all dashed for the door to get right away. There they waited for the explosion, expecting the saloon to be blown to pieces. They were even sorry for Tom, who would certainly be buried in the ruins if he did not look out.

They waited and waited, but there was no explosion. Twenty minutes later a few of the braver ones ventured to approach the inn. Tom was not there. He had disappeared through the back door, and with him had gone several bottles of brandy. The fuse was completely burned out, but no explosion had occurred, because, as soon as they looked carefully they found the stuff was not dynamite at all, only a bit of painted wood.

The owner of the saloon and his guests were very amused, and a few of the richer ones enjoyed the joke so much that they compensated the innkeeper for his lost bottles. The affair was soon the talk of the town, but nobody believed that such a trick would take anyone in again.

But here they were mistaken. Dawson Tom went to another saloon, again lit the fuse and called out: "Time, gentlemen, the pub is blowing up!", and in a moment the whole lot were in the street, and Tom again filled his pockets with bottles.

People said he would never manage to pull the trick off again, and really it hardly seemed possible.

Then one day Tom again went to an inn. He wanted brandy, but he had no money, and the innkeeper would not let him have any. One of the guests joined in the argument: then Dawson Tom put an empty barrel for herrings on the floor, started to shout, and got into a terrific temper, a thing unusual with him. Suddenly he pulled the top off the barrel and shouted:

"I've suffered you fools for a long time, but I won't stand it any longer. I've got powder here, the pub is going up! Cheerio, mates! This time we all go up."

He struck a match—and the saloon was empty. They fled helter-skelter, those who could went through the door, those who couldn't jumped through the window. Then Tom filled his pockets and quietly stole away.

After a while the innkeeper and his guests went back to see what had happened, and they found the barrel in the same state as Tom left it. They laughed till their sides split, for there was nothing in it but wooden shavings painted black.

So Tom became the terror of the Dawson saloons, and the police had to see him out of the town. So again he was reduced to misery, although his fame spread

through all the country. He moved along the Klondyke to the gold-fields higher up, but his evil reputation had already preceded him. When they heard in the creeks that Dawson Tom was approaching, everyone threw down his spade and ran to the saloon hoping that Tom would stop there. But the innkeepers were not so keen to see him, and as soon as Tom entered a saloon the barman threw him out again and shut the door. Then the gold-diggers swarmed round, and jeered, and teased poor Tom, thrown out of the place where he liked best to stay. But such episodes always had a happy ending; the gold-diggers invited Tom in and they let him drink his fill.

Some of them, however, fared badly. They may have been on good terms with Tom, perhaps they had already had enough to drink, but not as much as Tom fancied. Suddenly, when one least expected, Tom pulled out something from his pocket and shouted: "This time I'll show you what I can do! Time, gentlemen, the pub is going up. Cheerio, mates!"

They all laughed till tears ran down their cheeks, and, of course, they stayed where they were: the saloon shook with a terrific bang, pictures fell from the walls, glasses crashed from the bar, and at that everybody started to run. This time Tom had fired a rocket which he had bought from Chinese workmen who had been celebrating a national holiday.

When they all had fled he quietly took the bottles and went away.

He then went on to Sixty Miles. This town was still very small, for it had only just been founded, so he

went to stay with the gold-diggers and made a living by gambling.

But when they learned to know him they watched closely his fingers and sleeves. From there he went and settled near Forty Miles. Here he met some of his friends, and when he told them of the state he was in they put him on a gold-field. So Dawson Tom began to work. It looked as if at last he would turn into a straightforward, hard-working man, who would do no more than drink away what he had earned by honest sweat. But Tom only dug for the first few days. After that he was no good; one day he would dig, and for the next three he was just lazy; he could not break away from his old habits, and he was so slack at digging that he found very little gold. He preferred to lounge about the diggings and play cards.

But what was the matter? Had his good luck suddenly deserted him, or was he becoming stupid? Dawson Tom, the sharpest gambler, who had always known how to turn his luck to good effect, suddenly began to lose. And what losses! In one game he lost so much that he had to pawn his claim. It was really valuable, so, after he had lost that, he asked his opponent to lend him some more, for, so far, the winnings were small in comparison with the value of the claim. The winner gladly lent him more money, and looked forward to the time when the claim would be his.

But Dawson Tom pawned his claim to other players in just the same way, borrowing from them large sums of money. When he had lost his field about eighty times, and borrowed money on it as often, he was

ninety thousand dollars to the good, a sum of money which he would never have dug from his claim. Then, when he realized that he had made enough, he disappeared and left the claim, pawned so many times, in the hands of the Almighty.

When in due course the winners went to take possession of Tom's claim they found there three men already busy working, those who had first been cheated, and, of course, as soon as they met, they realized that they had made a bad bargain with Tom, but they did not get upset. They only tried to get out of the ground what Tom had put in his pocket or poured down his throat. But every day more and more people arrived who were involved in the affair, and when there were nearly eighty they all met in a saloon, and, after drink had revived their low spirits, they swore to protect Tom from any harm, for he was the best practical joker in all the Golden North. The claim was left to the first three men, who, after all, did not fare particularly well, for Tom's section was away from the main vein, and there was not much gold to be had.

In the meantime Dawson Tom was on his way along the River Tanana till he came to a small diggers' settlement called Tolovana. He arrived there just at the moment when a rumour was spreading through Alaska about the wonderful finds which had recently been made along the Cleary Down Creek near Fairbanks. As always in such cases everybody rushed there and the powerful stream carried Tom along with it. There was nothing for him, at least so it appeared at

first glance, for Fairbanks contained then only a few cottages and small shops, almost no saloons, and no sign of night life. Tom went to the gold-fields, and there he met a crowd of diggers who had just arrived and with whom he made friendships. In this way he soon learned that they all were bursting with gold, but had nothing to put in their mouths. They advised him to exploit the scarcity of provisions for his own use, and to get away into the woods round Karab creek and Dead Indian Trail, for there, and as far as the River Konteshna, there were big herds of moose. If he caught some of them and brought them in he could at one stroke earn more than if he struck the richest vein.

The idea was not so bad, and Dawson Tom thought it over. He knew that some steamers would be able to get to Fairbanks, but he realized that this could not be soon, and it was very unlikely that they would get in ahead of him. They would first have to survey the Yukon, find out where it was safe, and where there were rapids, and that would take a good deal of time. He had no fears for his enterprise from this quarter. He only wondered whether he could not earn something among the rich gold-diggers more easily than this, and without any capital. He looked about and saw how tightly everyone had to stick to his gold to have enough to pay for food, which was terribly expensive. Nobody would play with him, nobody would give him a job. There was no alternative; he must go for the moose.

But that was more easily said than done. Tom had no money and no equipment with which to begin on

his enterprise. That would not have mattered so much if he had had rifles and ammunition, but all he had was a revolver, of a very old pattern, and a very small supply of ammunition. You can realize his plight. You can understand that the job needed thinking over, even if it had not been very risky on other grounds.

At last, driven by hunger and misery, the poor fellow had to set out for the moose alone, and empty-handed. He travelled a long time, till at last he found hunters, and since apparently he was friendly and obliging he was soon on good terms with them. This was his opportunity; for if they had only known about him, his expedition would not have had such a happy ending. The hunters, however, did not find him out until much later: this is obvious from the fact that without any suspicions they began to play cards with him. In this, of course, Dawson Tom could not be beaten. He played only in the evening when the hunters were free, but he soon had a fine gun and ammunition as well: with these he could begin to hunt to some purpose, while he could still play cards in the evening. Soon he won all the game which the hunters had killed in several weeks; then he won their dogs, and then their sledges, until at last he brought to the gold-diggers the game which he had won, on the sledges which he had won, with the dogs which he had won, and so he earned an enormous amount of money. He was already a very wealthy man when the first boats began to arrive with provisions. Then Tom settled on Cleary Creek, where by now there were saloons and young ladies; he squandered his gold,

gambled and drank, gave a hand to everybody who needed help, and in a very short time had nothing left. As soon as he was bankrupt he had to clear out, for no one would let him enter a saloon: his evil reputation had arrived with the gold-diggers, and the place became too hot for him.

Then it occurred to Tom that, after all, he would have better chances with the hunters. So again he betook himself to the forests, gambled with any hunters whom he met by chance, and then returned to Fairbanks. Again he had to leave; this time he went to Tolovana, but from there he soon had to get away because of the victims of his previous adventures in the forest. Once again in the forest he stayed with an Indian who took him at last in his little boat down to Fort Gibbon. The Indian would not go farther, but Tom wanted to get farther west. If there were no transport he would go on foot. And so he went along the Yukon and lived by gambling with the Indians. He got as far as the River Koyukuk, where already steamers were running. He decided to wait for a ship so he camped for some days, and he had not to wait in vain. The boat was rather small and heavily laden with supplies, and it had to go at full steam to make headway against the current. Dawson Tom made a signal and begged the captain to take him on board. He promised to do any kind of job on the steamer, and asked to be allowed to chop wood for the boilers.

Men like that are always handy on a boat, and so the captain gladly took him on. Tom worked for a time until one day he managed to persuade the captain

to play a game of cards with him. The captain let himself go, he played and lost, he tried to get his money back, and he went on playing: he lost still more, and when the game was over Tom was the owner of the boat and everything it carried.

The ruined captain got up:

"Sir," he said, "I am handing over the boat to you. I am going to land with my family."

And Dawson Tom replied:

"But I'm not driving you away, you can stay on the boat as far as Betel!"

The captain was not anxious to stay, the boat was no longer his, and he did not want to be on it any longer; he wanted to tie up and get away. But Tom had to confess that he could not navigate the boat, and he did not know the river. He asked the captain, therefore, to look after the boat for him as far as the harbour in Betel, then he could go in peace. The captain said:

"Well then, but what shall I get if I do?"

"I'll pay you handsomely!" promised Tom.

So Dawson Tom went on in his boat to Betel in high spirits. The captain was no longer in charge, and the owner looked after discipline on the boat himself. In this way they got nearly as far as Betel when they had to stop to cut wood for the boilers. When they had finished the job, the captain said that since they had almost reached their goal it would be better if they came to terms. For what he had done in navigating the boat he demanded as much as it was worth with all its cargo.

"But that's sheer madness, I haven't as much with me!" said Tom.

"So give me the boat!"

"You make me laugh," said Tom. "You lost it in cards and now you want me to give it to you for such a small job!"

Two sailors, pure-blooded Indians, and the wife of the captain, also an Indian, listened to the argument, which was turning into a quarrel. As it reached its climax Tom ran to his cabin for a gun, but the three onlookers caught him, held him by the arms and legs, and threw him overboard into the water. Imagine the surprise of Dawson Tom the owner of the boat! In the end, however, he was glad to scramble out of the water through the dense thickets on the bank. He then went on to Betel on foot, for it was not far. When he arrived there the captain was already unloading his cargo, and Tom went straight up to him, put his hand on his shoulder, and said:

"You're a clever chap!"

Then he reminded the captain that when leaving the boat he had forgotten his gun in the cabin. The captain said that he would hand it over, but, of course, Tom would have to wait for the rifle and ammunition which had been taken to a safe place in Betel, and the captain would tell him before he sailed.

Tom was glad that, at any rate, he had fared no worse, and he was completely reconciled when the captain invited him on board and allowed him, hungry and thirsty as he was, to eat and drink his fill. Then as Tom was leaving, he told him where his rifle was,

and Tom congratulated himself on such a lucky escape.

Again he was down and out. Fortunately not for the first time in his life, and so with a light heart he moved on to Nolan Creek. There there were many gold-diggers and vagabonds. Tom was in congenial company, and he caught coneys on all sides: he also caught fish as well as coneys with the Aleutian Indians, and for a time he led a respectable life. He built a cabin for himself in Nolan Creek, and made some money which he put aside for better times. So he lived for a time quietly and in peace.

But not for long. Suddenly the gold-diggers made a raid on all card-sharpers; they shot them, and tormented them, and pursued them until they were scattered far and wide. Dawson Tom happened to be hunting at the time, and he only heard of the calamity when he returned. He dare not dream of going to the cabin to get his gold and equipment, he had quickly to turn his team and get out of the district, into the forests along the River Kobuk.

He was now more destitute than ever before. He had no ammunition, there was no one to play with, food was getting scarce, and he could hardly find a refuge in the whole of Alaska. But would his usual luck desert him?

He came to a hunter's cabin in the forest, and as he drew near he exchanged greetings with two old hunters who had been living there a very long time. But neither of them played cards, or any other game; they only hunted, and once in a while they went away to exchange furs for provisions and equipment.

Company like this made no appeal to Tom; he decided to leave them at the first opportunity. This came earlier than Tom had expected: both hunters set off into the forest and left their guest alone in the cabin, so Tom packed a sledge with foodstuffs, took everything of value to the hunters, hitched up the team and set off on a mad career.

In the evening the hunters returned, at a glance they saw what was the matter, and they set off to find their neighbours and tell them what had happened. The neighbours roused the Indians. Early in the morning they set out after the thief, and in the evening good luck had deserted Dawson Tom for ever. For five years he had swindled everyone he met; during all this time he had always managed to escape what he deserved, and now suddenly he was hemmed in by a circle of pursuers from whom there was no escape. Resistance was useless, and realizing that, he gave himself into their hands. They did not talk much. They made no inquiries. They only bent down a young sapling, a noose was slipped round Tom's neck, and his body flew into the air.

The hunters returned, and not till much later did they learn that they had executed the greatest practical joker in the North.

A FATHER AGAINST HIS SON

But gold could do worse things than this. It changed honest people into thieves and murderers; more than once it put parents against their children, men against

their closest friends and dearest companions; it roused the worst human feelings and led to merciless ingratitude. I know a story which is still told in the North as an example of the power of gold.

The affair took place at the other end of Alaska, in Nome. There lived there a young man, called Watson, who worked in Auvill Hill, in the fields called Copper Gulch. For two years he sweated there, and finally he pegged out a claim himself. That winter he worked hard, and in spring, when he saw that he was on a good thing, he remembered his poor father, and in the autumn he wrote for him to come; they would have a good time together. He sent money, and the father arrived. They both began work, and it was fine to see how nicely they got on together and how well they fared. But suddenly the father realized that there was very much gold to be had. The more he thought about it the more he was seized with a desire to have it all for himself; so he went to town, found a lawyer and bribed witnesses, and the court made over the field to the father.

Young Watson immediately left the country. The father was glad to see him go; he worked the claim himself, he got out of the ground as much gold as he could, and before winter began he decided to go to Nome to deposit his wealth in the bank. So he set out on a journey which was not very far, and which had always been perfectly safe; but near Little Creek a masked man jumped out, not saying a word, but brandishing a revolver. Old Watson had to shake from his bag everything he had. Then like mad he ran on to Nome,

told everything to the sheriff, but the thief was gone, although they searched for him high and low.

The position of the old man was now serious; he had no money to buy food, he could not pay his workers; it took him a long time to find a man who would stand surety for him at the bank so that he could get some provisions together and return to the gold-field, where he began to work the flesh off his bones. He slaved, he really slaved the whole winter to make up for his loss. When spring came old Watson had dug as much gold as he had lost, and he decided to take it to Nome. He had learned something from his previous experience, and so he took with him a tough but trustworthy man, and they set out on their journey together. They went again the same way as before, for usually there was no danger, but before they had passed the hill, they were surrounded by masked men, they were both tied up and left with not a speck of gold. The robbers disappeared as secretly as they had come, nobody knew where. Old Watson and his companion were found, they were released, and there was a great fuss in the town, for everybody was frightened for his property.

But there were no more assaults like this. Some time later a man called Frieding, one of young Watson's friends, appeared in the saloons and bars in Nome, and he showed a letter from his comrade in Siberia, in which young Watson stated that he was the one who had waylaid his father, and robbed him of his gold. He had done this because the father had stolen the mine from him. With this letter Frieding went about,

showed it to everybody, and collected careful evidence of what had happened. Then, when everyone knew about it, he went to old Watson and handed him the letter.

I guess that that worried old Watson more than both the robberies put together. Before people had pitied him. Now they spat at him.

I GET CAUGHT BY THE GOLD-FEVER

I must say that I knew all about this, and much else besides, when one spring I set out for Canada while my old friend Emerson looked after my business. The business was already running smoothly, and so I could afford to look for new sources of income

Polar men don't wait till the last moment to think of what they are going to do when winter is over; they talk about it months before, in late summer, in autumn, and in the first spring days, when they meet on the ice or in some cave. In my underground home, one of the biggest and finest in New Siberia, I entertained many a famous hunter, for after all he was associated with my trade. I had many acquaintances, and these often dropped in for a chat, even if they had no business to transact. As soon as spring began I used to be visited by those who had wintered on the islands and been compelled to live in silence the whole time, unless, of course, they had talked to themselves in their caves.

So one day I had in my cave a very big party of friends. They all began to talk about gold. I was not at all astonished at that for in those days anyone in the

North might catch the gold-fever, and one talked of nothing else. Everyone was tempted to try his luck, for when the whole North was mad, sensible men looked the biggest fools. In our chat someone suggested that we ought to try our luck. What a dreadful disease this gold-fever is! Someone started it by saying that he knew a very good spot in Canada, but it would be best to go at once before news of it spread all over the country, or we should be crowded out in the rush.

"Then we ought to go at once, or not at all!" I said.

Na Anko, a clever Eskimo hunter, and a friend of mine, thought that it would be best to get there over the ice before the end of March: his six friends, Chotj, Ajaak, Took, Tukuut, Achaat, and Kagian all agreed, and the others gave the same advice.

We discussed all the details, and when we separated it was decided that at the end of March we should all meet on Figurina, the northernmost island of our archipelago, and from there we should set out straight across the ice to catch the Mackenzie while it was still frozen, by means of which we should get right into the interior of Canada. We all expected to get rich at one stroke, and for myself my only worry was that somebody might get to those gold-fields before us.

Towards the end of March the terrible frosts became milder and the sun began to appear for a moment about mid-day. I was ready for the journey. We intended to stay on the American continent until the following spring, and I had therefore to take with me all necessary materials for building cabins, like window-frames,

strong panes of glass, hinges, and a petroleum stove. I also took my guns, a locksmith's outfit, supplies of food, and other things as well. And so one day I harnessed a big pack of my dogs and set out for Figurina. I knew the way by heart, and the fourth day I arrived without mishap at Na Anko's cave, where the other members of the party were already anxiously waiting. We did not hang about, we set off at once on our journey to Canada. It is a tidy distance, and we had to keep moving so as not to lose time.

The journey over the frozen sea was not without adventure. In many places the ice was piled so high that it was absolutely impossible to keep straight on. If such a barrier was only twelve feet high or so we could tie the dogs to a rope and let them clamber up the slanting wall of ice. The dogs then clawed their way up the ice, as if on a roof, and as soon as some of them reached the other side it was all right, because their weight helped them to pull. But if when it broke water rolled over the floe it had a surface like glass, which the dogs could not face. Then we had to shoot a way through the obstacle, and this took a dreadful amount of time, but to go round such a barrier would have meant the loss of many hours, perhaps of days, because the ridges of pack-ice sometimes run for miles and miles. All this is nothing new for me. I had known about it for years, ever since my expeditions into the Arctic after game, when the hardships were greater still.

We slept on the sledges under the tents; for fire we had our petroleum stoves. During the journey the

twilight allowed us to see just as much as we needed; only here or there to light our way, if it was particularly dangerous, we had to use our torches. When we reached the coast of Alaska we set off along the cliffs. Here I knew something of the way from my journeys with the Alaskan post.

We never met a soul until we reached Herschel Island. This island lies in the estuary of the Mackenzie River, so that here in summer salt and fresh water meet. This region is called the Big Delta. The island itself is a very important station, and forms the starting-point for many hunting and gold-digging expeditions into the interior of Northern Canada. I had been there before. For a time before regular traffic had been established on the Yukon, expeditions of prospectors used to go to Herschel Island, and farther on up the Mackenzie and Porcupine Rivers, when they were looking for gold in Eastern Alaska, or round Dawson City. It was a long journey with the boat right round Alaska, and then on land one had to cut one's way through thick forests where lynxes and other animals were very dangerous, but still it was safer than the route which I had already followed, from Dyea on the Pacific coast over the murderous Chilcoot Pass, and from the source of the Yukon to the gold-fields of Dawson. Later, when a regular steamship service had been established on the Yukon, travelling into the interior of Alaska became easier, and the frightful prices of commodities in Alaska and Northern Canada fell at once.

On Herschel Island there was a telegraph station.

It was the end of the line, and so in a way almost the end of the world. Much farther north there are unknown lands where nobody has been, except for the archipelago which lies north of Canada. The wires of the telegraph passed from the island to the mainland, and there in the vast tundra they ran along the ground covered by a wooden framework. Not until about two hundred miles farther south, where the forests begin, did the wires go above the ground, for there the Polar storms are not so bad, and less damage was done to the wires than where they had to be protected by the framework. Now there is a big State wireless station on Herschel Island. The next big one is hundreds and hundreds of miles further south on the State track which had been cut from the Mackenzie River through the forests towards White Horse in the south-west and to the source of the Yukon. There at White Horse there is the next big station.

After expeditions have landed at Herschel Island the boats are pulled up on shore, all the principal parts of the vessels are dismantled and hidden among the rocks in a secret place known only to those concerned. This step is very necessary to prevent anyone stealing the boats while the hunters are away. An Eskimo and his family are left on board to watch the boat, and a party of men with dog-sledges call twice during the winter, once before Christmas and again at the beginning of February, bringing loads of furs and taking back provisions to the hunting grounds. It is the watchman's duty in April or May to beat a track on the ice with snow shoes from the island to the main-

land, and to mark its end on shore with a conspicuous tripod, which carries a sign which has been already agreed on so that those returning can find the boats again.

We found there plenty of boats, and we asked their watchmen how the expeditions were getting on, what the bag was, and where each party was hunting. Besides us there was a smaller hunting expedition from our islands which had left the year before in a boat called *Seven Sisters*. We found the boat pulled up on shore. We told the Eskimo who guarded it where we were bound, and he again gave us news of the trappers. And so we stayed there almost a whole day. We called here and there, bought more provisions, and then set out over the frozen surface of the Mackenzie, making south into the interior of Canada. The journey was pleasant, and so easy that in a few days we had reached the small tributary where we expected to strike gold.

We looked for other gold-diggers. We were very much afraid that there would be people there already, and we expected to have to fight for every inch of ground. Instead we only found four men all told. They welcomed us with great cheers, because while numbers were small they were exposed to all kinds of danger. They showed us at once where there was gold, and in which direction to begin working, and so we began to divide the ground up among us as fairly as possible. Each man staked out a plot thirty yards by sixty, and when we had done this we began to make arrangements for staying a good while. The veins of gold ran along the bank of the river, which was not very high,

and since in time of flood the bank would be under water, we had to build our cabins on the opposite bank, which was steeper and higher. We found plenty of wood, and so I soon built a small hut, just big enough for me to lie down in with my body stretched right out: I managed to squeeze in the small stove, which I had used all through the journey, and there was just room for the little wooden table which I made for myself. It was not a very comfortable lodging, but it sheltered me against the weather, and it would do very well for the winter which we intended to spend there.

To get to my field I had to cross the river and go some distance to my plot, which was farthest down the valley. I beat out a footpath from my cabin to the river, and from its bank to my plot, and then I began to dig. The earth was still frozen hard, but I was young, and so I had not to melt the earth with fire; I just dug straight down as fast as I could towards the gold, and looked forward to being the first to bring anything up.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH A WOLF

The region where we were digging for gold had a great reputation for being dangerous. I had therefore to take with me every day to my plot, besides my tools, all the weapons I possessed, and while I was working I had to keep an eye open all the time, but even so I made good progress, and soon I had dug a deep hole at the bottom of which I ought to find gold. Then I ran tunnels in all directions, trying to strike the veins of gold.

Every morning I hurried to my work, and I sweated like a nigger till the evening; I slept very little; again I was off to my mine, and once there I worked as hard as I could, because I was anxious to be rich, and the sole proprietor of *Laura*. After all, when a man is excited through long waiting, he thinks of nothing else, his head is full of worries about his work, and he cannot pay attention to anything else. And so one morning I got up and went again along my footpath. As I went I suddenly heard something prowling behind me. With a shock I realized that for the very first time I had gone without any weapons. I had nothing with me to beat off an attack: I looked back. You can imagine how I felt! Eight paces behind me there was a big wolf, the timber wolf of Alaska. He is not so dangerous as the smaller ones, which will go for anything, but he is not a nice customer to meet. When I stopped and turned the wolf also stopped, and so we looked at each other. I looked at him steadily, and slowly, step by step, I moved back along the path towards my mine. Step by step the wolf followed me. The distance between us got no greater, instead, it seemed to me, that the wolf was getting nearer. Every moment I expected a fierce attack, from which I should hardly eacape alive. Still nothing happened. One by one the minutes dragged by. Step by step I moved further back. If only I had a rifle! All I could do was to retire inch by inch.

By now I knew I was near my mine. I made half a step more, and before the wolf moved again I turned, with a jump I got hold of the rope, and, without

bothering about the wolf, I slipped as fast as I could down the mine. Before my feet touched the bottom the wolf threw himself at the hole, and snarled as he looked at me. I slipped down faster still, but unfortunately my wheelbarrow was just at the bottom of the rope. With one foot I landed on it, with the other in water. I slipped and fell on the wheelbarrow so terribly hard that I thought my body was broken in two. I crawled away in great pain and crept into one of the tunnels; there I fainted. I must have been lying there for a long time when I woke with cold. I tried to get up, but I could not stand on my feet. My hands were numb with cold, so I lit two candles and warmed myself with their flame; I wrapped myself in sacks which I used to cover the hole at night to keep the ground from getting frozen, and for an hour I lay in the tunnel. The pain seemed to be slowly leaving me, so I crawled on all fours out of the tunnel to the opening and looked up: to my amazement I saw again the wolf's jaws. That nearly drove me mad. I didn't know what to do with the patient animal. And what if he decided to be more patient still?

Finally I hit on a good idea. I took three pieces of dynamite, a detonator and a fuse, tied them all together in a sack, and when it was all ready I set the fuse alight and threw the whole lot up. The wolf snarled, and kept looking at me, but some minutes later the dynamite went bang, and the wolf cleared off as fast as he could.

And then I got into a rage: I ran straight to my hut, where my dogs were tied. I sent a wolf-hound after the wolf, quickly collected my things, harnessed the

other dogs, snatched up a rifle, and rushed off after him. The first dog had already caught him up. He could not do much damage, but he kept the wolf in check by jumping in front of him. When I drew near I let loose the other dogs as well, and these threw themselves on him with great fury. The wolf howled terribly while the dogs bit him and tore him, until I could hear his bones cracking. In the end he lay down, and I gave him three shots from my revolver; that was the only kindness I could show him.

My neighbour, who heard the howling and shooting, came running to the spot, and I told him what had happened. He took me home, and as soon as I got to my hut I collapsed half-dead. The wound which I got as I fled from the wolf now began to be really painful to such an extent that I had to lie up for several days. My friends nursed me, sharing the work among themselves; they made fire, warmed water, and gave me hot compresses until I recovered.

I kept on digging until the following spring, but during my illness I had made up my mind, and I decided never again to dig for gold, unless there was nothing left for me to do. So I really never dug again, although I had plenty of opportunities. The wound and the small profit from my first mine cured me of the gold-fever for ever. I left my plot; perhaps it still lies there just as I left it. Anyone who finds it can have it; it is mine no longer.

It never again entered my head to dig for gold, particularly when I realized more and more that the person who does make money in the gold-fields is

never the gold-digger himself, but the middleman who provides him with equipment and food, and negotiates the disposal of the precious metal. I decided to exploit the natural riches in Alaska and Canada in this second way, and to-day I can say that I was right. Of course, I did not get as rich as the few men who were lucky enough to amass colossal riches in gold, but they were mostly the owners or shareholders of steamship companies on the Yukon and Mackenzie, or bankers who bought gold at a considerable discount. Compared with them I was only a small shopkeeper, who travelled from place to place. Sometimes I hunted, or I set out on long expeditions on foot with my team. But it was of some use to me. I was always meeting fresh people, who told me of many things, and explained what was difficult or mysterious for me; I gained great experience through observation and prudence which are indispensable in that land of great possibilities; but at the same time I acquired the moderation which is essential for those in contact with gold. I could walk round heaps of it, see it washed, and handle it without excitement, like a man who is only casually interested in these things. I could listen quietly to stories of good luck which this man or that had met with, it no longer roused any desire in me to dig as well: in short, I was cured of the gold-fever. I learned to know the gold-fields and the men there well, just because the glitter could dazzle my eyes no longer.

They knew it. People trusted me because gold had not spoiled me. The gold-diggers gave me an insight into their customs and working methods; I saw their

sufferings and privations. I soon learned to know of many places where gold was still hidden in the ground, many of them have not been touched to the present day, and I remember them only because if one day I happened to lose everything and had to beg I should become a gold-digger. It is a horrid occupation, but a bit better than begging.

II

IN THE FORESTS OF NORTHERN CANADA

HUNTING EXPEDITIONS FROM OUR ISLANDS

Well then, gold had disappointed me. After my return I turned it over in my head, and I saw that my gold-mine had not given me back as much as I had put into the confounded business. The coy metal scoffed at me, the rascal; I slaved like a nigger for nothing, it only caused me trouble and vexation. So I said to myself: "Leave it alone, my boy! Stick to your guns and traps!"

Very well. From that time I searched no more for those golden clods except when I could get them for my furs, or for provisions delivered to the gold-diggers. I stuck to hunting. Here, at any rate, a man depends first upon his hands and the experience he has acquired, he need not look to God and His kind face. Let us salute Him—but I believe more in myself.

And really. Good luck which deserted me when I wearied myself to death trying to find gold, returned as soon as I packed my gun-case and loaded my sledges with dozens of traps.

But I must start at the beginning:

In the Arctic a man's life is a perpetual hunt. It is his very existence. He hunts on the mainland, especially in North America, and on the everlasting ice, either in the piercing wilderness of the Arctic

Ocean, in high latitudes, or in Novaya Zemlya, or on the islands of Franz Josef Land. On the mainland the most important hunting grounds for a man in the Arctic, especially for us in New Siberia, are those to the farthest ranges of the Rockies, which spread through the whole of America and lose themselves in the extreme North.

To-day, after I have travelled so many thousands of miles over the ice on the eternal chase after game, and after I have penetrated into so many deep forests, to emerge from them with sledges piled high with furs, or perhaps empty-handed, these expeditions seem to me just such a casual adventure as a walk round with a gun on a Saturday afternoon would do to you. Many of my acquaintances, and some of the best friends I had, perished miserably on these expeditions, right in front of my very eyes, without my being able to render the slightest assistance. One had to suffer extreme hardships, to arm oneself with superhuman patience, to be able to say on the return home that at whatever cost the trip had been worth while.

Hunting like this is the ordinary routine of a Polar man's life: to stay through the winter in the forests, in spring to return with stacks of furs and exchange them in Nome, or on Herschel Island, for provisions, or sell them for cash; to carry the provisions back again to the islands in the Arctic Ocean, among the Eskimos and white settlers, to get in exchange fish for the dogs and more furs—and so on, always moving backwards and forwards.

And yet I like to remember my hunting expeditions;

for it is to them in particular that I owe the greater part of my success in the North. To-day, thanks to them, I can say that I know the mysterious and mostly unexplored forests of the whole of Alaska, and big areas of Northern Canada better than in my young days I used to know the woods round Zábřeh.

On the islands of the Arctic Ocean there are hundreds of fine hunters and clever trappers. The expeditions are arranged, as I said before, in spring, when the white men and Eskimos meet on the ice. Notice of the next expedition is left with the leaders, as, for instance, with me, or with anyone of note in the Arctic. So the Polar men determine among themselves when and where they will hunt next winter.

Big parties go to Alaska by way of the river Yukon, and these start first, in August before autumn begins. They usually go by steamer to St. Michael which lies on the northern side of the estuary of the Yukon, and from there they go to the rivers Innoko, Kuskokwime, or Iditorat; everywhere there there is a terrific amount of game. Others again make for Nulata, or work their way through the forests to the valley of the river Koyukuk, especially where the river forms shoals and flats, called Koyukuk-flats. There there are the densest forests. These hunters usually leave with the first or the second whaler which goes to Alaska on its way to the States, to Japan, or to Vladivostok. These boats stop at Nome, where the members of the expedition must change to a smaller steamer. The small steamer takes them to St. Michael, where they change for a second time to river steamers which provide transport

on the immense stream of the Yukon. Some Polar men again make for the mainland of Siberia; for instance, for Kamchatka, where they hunt through the whole winter into the spring.

While discussing the expedition the men talk about the luck they had last year. Those who were lucky last year must not join the expedition this time, they must give their places to others. The Eskimo, and the white man as well, who last time caught as much as will provide him with all he needs for the coming year, usually of his own free will gives up his place in the party and instead nominates someone else. But sometimes all members of the expedition did well last time, in which case, however, some of the lucky ones must go again, because with every expedition there must be at least four men who know the region well for which they are bound.

We in the islands of New Siberia, however, went usually in winter to Northern Canada, along the river Mackenzie to the Rockies, where the animals had the best coats. We had there four vast hunting grounds which we visited year after year in rotation so that the fifth winter we again moved into the region where we had been the first time. In the meantime the game which had been reduced in numbers by the first expedition, had time to multiply again.

Most frequently we assembled on the islands of New Siberia by boat at the end of September; or in October, if the sea was already frozen, on sledges. The final meet was usually on Figurina, the northernmost island which is inhabited in the New Siberian Archipelago.

From there then we set out in a line for Herschel Island. If we went by boat the steamer had first, at the beginning of September, to go right round all the islands, from Bear Island to Figurina. On such a boat there would be from ten to fifteen hunting parties, and each party consisted of from seven to thirty, or even a hundred members. Every hunter had a sledge with dogs, and the sledge was loaded with plentiful supplies of everything necessary for spending the whole winter in forests covered with snow: a benzine or petroleum stove, a kettle, canvas and posts for the tent, furs for sleeping in, canvas for the dogs, various tools, the essential parts of a wooden hut, particularly doors, hinges, and strong window glass, from six to ten guns, among them a double-barrelled gun with dum-dum bullets for bears, a big shot-gun for wolves, and wolverines, revolvers, knives, lots of traps, poisons, and poisonous salves, clothes and underwear, and finally supplies of food, salt, pepper, coffee, tea, beans, tobacco —well, that about completes the list. Every hunter had on him strong and warm bearskin trousers; altogether from head to foot he was wrapped in furs; on his feet he had maklaks, on his hands gloves of silk, rat, or reindeer; for in Northern Canada winter shows what it can do, and man, especially a hunter, must be thoroughly protected against it.

We had to go hunting in winter because at that time the animals have the best coats. Of course, I did not go there every year. At other times I went on business to Alaska, sometimes I dropped out because last time I had done very well; another time I went

to the most easterly part of Asia, or finally, I sat at home in my cave, particularly if in the previous summer I had been lucky when hunting in the Arctic Ocean.

But the year after the unhappy expedition in search of gold, which ended so badly, I gladly put my name down for the big expedition to Canada, because so many of my friends were going as well: MacDonald, Oerrel, Na Anko and his friends, many Eskimos and many white settlers from the neighbouring islands.

Men of the Arctic, for months and months condemned to solitude, are all the more talkative when together. While travelling by boat one eats, sleeps, smokes, and talks because the Eskimos look after the dogs and do other necessary jobs. Every man tells the others what happened to him last summer, or, more often, over the last ten years; so one hears every day, perhaps for the tenth or fiftieth time, a story which one very nearly knows by heart, but which, nevertheless, one likes to hear again, especially if the man remembers some unusual and interesting detail. I myself told the story of my adventures, particularly those on my way through Siberia, again and again, and year after year, but they all liked to listen. During the journey the greenhorns are initiated in advance, while those who were with us last year and are now no longer, because their bones are lying somewhere, are not often mentioned. With us in the North friendship goes as far as the grave; not beyond. A man who is dead is dead, we need not think of him any longer, we need not remember him. We must live, and to do that we have to think how to get the most furs, and how to barter them

on the best terms to get a living for the whole of the next year.

We were all men; this is nearly always the rule. Very occasionally someone takes women as well; these are usually Jurtens, Baramists, or Fetishists; women from the tribes living along the shores of the Bering Sea. These women set traps in the hunting-grounds, and inspect them day after day; they chop wood, or skin animals, clean the skins, and dress them on the spot. They are mostly hybrids, because the pure-blooded women of the northern tribes smell too much. Even these women are not allowed to cook, this job is always done by men because they are cleaner.

Our boat was bound directly for Herschel Island and there we landed. There our troubles began. Some of us had to look after the boat while it was being pulled up properly on dry land, others with time to spare went round the stores and finished their shopping, making up any odd equipment which was missing. I went shopping myself to have goods to barter, added still more to my big supply of traps, bought ammunition, took still more dynamite, so that we should be able, if necessary, to blow a hole in the rocks; and so, bit by bit, I had everything necessary for that expedition and for the whole winter.

From Herschel Island we did not always proceed to the hunting-grounds in the Rockies by the same route. If we were lucky and had managed to get away from Figurina very early, and reached Herschel Island before the first frosts, we went by boat up the river Mackenzie for about a hundred miles into the interior of the land

where the forests began. There we stopped, and by felling trees we built a ramp up which we hauled the boat, as if on rails, with pulleys and blocks. Usually two men stayed by the boat, which in spring, when the river was clear of ice, took us back to Herschel Island. At this time of the year the river is full of yellow mud, and the banks are everywhere as if specially created for safe landing, particularly where there are sand dunes.

If the Mackenzie was already frozen more than ten inches thick we whistled with glee; we could then slip straight up the river in easy comfort without any danger. But it was much worse when the river was not completely frozen, or especially on the way back, if the ice was already breaking up. It was usually like this. Then we had to go over the tundra often many miles from the river up to the Rockies.

PROFIT IN SIGHT

That year there was already ice on the Mackenzie, but it was still very thin, and we saw at once that this time the journey would not be at all easy, because it would be impossible to go by the river. It is true we might have waited till the ice got thicker, but to wait like that is very expensive, for one might stick there for weeks, or it might turn bitterly cold all at once with snow-storms and severe frosts, and then it would be difficult to get along. It was clear that we ought to get away at once, and that we should have to go by way of the tundra.

In the meantime we were busy getting the boat stowed away against bad weather and thieves, and everyone was occupied in fixing the load on his sledge, feeding the dogs, and getting ready for a strenuous journey.

While we were very busy doing this, MacDonald returned from a stroll over the island and round the boats. He was in high spirits, and he called us together and said: "The gold-diggers are here, boys: we shan't be alone: they want to come with us. They have so much gear that they can't manage alone."

"Well," we thought, "that's a good beginning! That will be fine, but shall we get paid for the transport?"

MacDonald said that that was his own look-out, those people were very well off: we should not lose anything with them, he had already had a look at their equipment, dogs, and sledges; it was pretty clear that they were not beggars. The only thing that might be inconvenient was that the load might be too big.

Of course, MacDonald was pulling our legs. The bigger it was the better it was for us: at least we could earn something. After all, we were not a small party, such a lot of hefty white men, dogs and Eskimos; we could carry a good deal of stuff.

So we went over to the party of gold-diggers, had a look at them and I saw at once that they were all right. So we discussed terms with them. They had rather too many of those boilers, motors, and other things which are necessary for mining, but we set to work at once to put things in order. Those who could piled more stuff on their own sledges; other sledges we

cleared completely and loaded them with big machines. Their own sledges also carried a good deal, and so in less than a couple of hours everything had been carefully fixed up and the first sledge was ready to start. In a moment the whole caravan of dog teams was moving. To some sledges there were fewer dogs, to others more, according to the size of the load.

But I can't describe the terrors of that trail. It took twelve days, because we had to make long detours to avoid wild, desolate mountains. Sometimes we did forty miles in a day, sometimes only four. Everywhere the tundra was covered with snow, but so thinly that it made it still more difficult for us to travel, for between hillocks of lichen the Polar storms had cut zig-zag trenches some feet deep, and because they were not filled in with snow it was a dreadful job to get the dogs and sledges along. Snow really does not begin to fall there until the middle of November, but by then the hunters must be out of the tundra and in the places where they are making for, and where they intend to stay the winter; because very soon after that the Polar darkness sets in.

This Polar darkness is not so dreadful there as on the islands of New Siberia: now and then about midday we saw some sunlight, but we had to be on the move for several hours a day, and often we had to light our way with torches. A man who has not been there can scarcely imagine what a struggle with the tundra is like, when with only the light from their torches the exhausted hunters lift a sledge out of a trench, where the water has not yet completely frozen, and where the

heavy sledge forces the man who is trying to push it up down to his chest in icy mud and water. The howling of the dogs often mingles with the swearing of desperate men. How many people have already died there from exhaustion, particularly those who had the temerity to go alone!

In parts we helped ourselves over the uneven tundra in the worst places in the following manner: We fixed together four trees which we had taken with us, harnessed all the men in front, first the smallest, then the bigger and then the biggest, and behind followed the dogs, five hundred or more dogs in a row, one behind the other. The men trampled a path with their snowshoes, and the dogs dragged the beams which made a path almost as smooth as a railway track. That done we all returned for the sledges and went forward easily in that way. Of course, going like that we could not do more than four miles a day, but still it was better than sticking helplessly in one spot.

In this way a man who has never been there can get at least a slight idea of what it means to travel through those accursed regions, especially when they are not properly covered with snow. One must realize that the gold-diggers who were with us had heavy boilers, machines, pumps, and electric motors, besides enormous supplies of food, of ammunition and explosives; and the whole lot sometimes fell ten or twenty times a day upside down into holes full of wet snow and mud.

It sometimes happens, as I had already heard before, that a hunter or a gold-digger goes mad and shoots

himself in despair; rather than exert his failing strength to get his things together, he simply dies of complete exhaustion. Sometimes a weary hunter sets up his tent in the evening, happy that after all he has all his things in order, and falling on his sledge under the tent, is asleep in a moment like a log; then a Polar storm comes racing, everything is tossed about, and the frost bites through every slit to his bones. The storm tears the lichen from the ground in an icy drift, often the tent is blown to tatters, and the unhappy man roused from his sleep deep as death, still fumbling, half awake, blinded by the hurricane and enveloped in columns of snow, passes away, and the snow piles itself higher and higher over his body. On our expedition we found the sad remains of those who had never reached their goal: the bodies of men and dogs, and heavily-laden sledges whose loads meant the futile loss of considerable wealth.

It is no better on the other bank of the Mackenzie. That route had always to be followed by those who wanted to get from Alaska across the Mackenzie; and particularly when it became known that along the streams flowing into the Mackenzie gold had been found, crowds of prospectors from Alaska rushed there along the Porcupine River, or along the State trail from White Horse. Those who went there in summer perished almost to a man, because before they reached the Mackenzie, they got stuck in the endless swamps of the tundra. They could only move forward very slowly, food became scarce, they had to sleep in water, and, at last, completely exhausted, they

could stand up no longer. Between 1900 and 1920 something like fifty or a hundred men died there every year. Others again, as I said before, were caught on the tundra by the Polar storms, against which they were completely helpless even in their tents and with their paraffin stoves, which in good weather give out a nice heat, and which we always kept burning near us at night on our way through the tundra. Fortunately on this occasion we met with no such accidents.

During all that dreadful journey we never met a living soul, except for one man whom we used to meet regularly; so whenever we halted to rest and began to talk about the day's adventures we kept asking:

"I wonder if that Syljean is still alive somewhere!" It meant that if he was alive he would certainly be waiting for us on station 120. He was the most famous hunter of muskrats, and one of the many eccentric recluses whom I either learned to know in the Canadian forests, and tundra, or of whose strange lives I heard.

Some of these Canadian recluses went hunting on the pitiless North American Archipelago through immense icy desolations, as far as the eighty-sixth degree, up to Cape Columbia, close to the northernmost part of Greenland. One wonders how anyone can manage to keep alive there. When I went sometimes on a whaling vessel from Herschel Island towards the North, by the north-west waterway, in the direction of that cape, I looked at those islands, and was overwhelmed by their icy desolation. Everyone was certain that no man could live there, even for a time; but these men hunt there for seals, walruses, and fish.

Some could stay there for several years and sometimes lived almost without fire, learned to eat raw meat, and in their habits closely resembled animals. The Frenchman, Syljean, was one of them, and his life-story is really incredible.

He was an old man with white hair, and with a beard falling to his knees, but he was still very sturdy. On his face he was hairy like an ape, and his beard began under his eyes. In summer he went about three parts naked: he was the hardiest man that I ever met. Usually he bought salt and spice, a bit of flour, tea, and sugar from us: that was enough for him: he had no use for coffee, chocolate, or cocoa, not even for beans. To transport his equipment he used two bears, which together with a few dogs were his only companions. He never stayed with us for more than a very short time, then he took everything with him up to the coast near the tundra. He knew his bearings remarkably well in all parts of Northern Canada, and also on the islands north of the American mainland. Here in Canada he caught nothing but muskrats. Winter after winter he had from eight to ten thousand skins. So he lived in the extreme north of Canada for several years; only very rarely did he appear among the Indians or the Eskimos on the river, where traders in furs who knew him well came to find him. But sometimes he set out for the islands lying north of Canada, and caught seals, walruses, and salmon. He used to speak of the Eskimos, who lived and died in the regions of the extreme North, the natives, who had come from the Greenland side, and who lived

there for several years before they disappeared again, where, he never found out. Once he said he lived with some Eskimos in a hole till they all died: he stayed there alone for a little longer and then again he moved south to Northern Canada. That man had spent many years on those islands.

He told us the story of his adventures. When he was seventeen he sailed north from the States on a whaler: he did not like the job, he had a brutal captain, and so in the end he deserted with five or six other sailors, near Herschel Island. The captain with the rest of the crew set out after him into the tundra, even as far as the forests of Northern Canada, for he needed men very badly. But he searched in vain, for the fugitives got into the forests and mountains, and so the pursuers had to return to the boat. Syljean with his comrades went on through the forests towards the south-east: they ate only animal flesh. Fortunately they took rifles with them when they ran off, and they shot: but soon they ran short of matches, and they had to learn to eat raw meat. How they lived there, God only knows. Syljean was always very much moved when he talked of someone he called Oskar, who in the end stayed with him alone when all the others who could bear the hardships no longer had died.

These two lonely men slowly began to hunt musk-rats. As Syljean said, misery alone compelled them to begin. They saw the animals running on the tundra, and it occurred to them that they might live on their flesh. They went for them and beat them with clubs, but they had their work cut out to avoid being bitten,

because the animals, which at first did not realize what was happening, finally attacked them, and bit them badly with teeth as sharp as razors. The rats tasted excellently, and at the same time they noticed their soft fur, and saved the skins.

In their wanderings through the forests they got as far as the Eskimo reservations on the river Mackenzie, and there a new life began for them. They sold the furs for good prices, and they said that in the regions where they had lived there was an immense quantity of those rats. The Indians advised them to hunt the animals with trained dogs and water. For the furs which they sold they bought a big supply of everything they needed, made traps, bought trained dogs, and moved back to their hunting-place.

Oskar could not stand this new easy way of living. The change and cooked meals had such an effect on him that he suddenly fell ill, and died. From that time Syljean had had no friend, and did not look for any. He became a past-master in the art of catching muskrats with water, and at long intervals he went to the river and sold an enormous number of skins. It took several years, it is true, before he became known to all the traders, but then they went to find him. Later, when he began to sell regularly, the demand for the furs increased; gloves made of them came into the fashion, and the price of muskrat skins jumped up in one year to sixty dollars apiece.

We all thought of Syljean, because we wondered whether he was still among the living. Suddenly someone shouted in front: "Syljean! Syljean!" and soon

one after the other the sledges halted at the station, and as if it were already time to rest men and dogs, we made camp after we had exchanged hearty greetings with the old boy. Since the last meeting he had traversed whole continents, nothing had changed in him, he was the same as ever and waiting to buy from us the things he needed.

We questioned him on many things; he told us news of the whole North, and when there was nothing left to tell he began on the story of his life, the same story which we had already heard from him at least ten times.

But partly out of respect for him, partly because with us there were men who could now hear the story from Syljean's own lips, we let him go on, and gladly listened again, because among our daily cares we might have forgotten some of it.

SYLJEAN TELLS THE STORY OF THE GREATEST CATASTROPHE IN CANADA

The paraffin stove in the tent gave out a nice warmth when Syljean began:

"You know what fools men are in Dawson!" He looked round, and when we all nodded agreement, he went on:

They're mad enough now! But that's nothing compared with what they were some years ago. You can all imagine what kind of men they were, when the craze for gold was at its height: everybody wanting to

be a millionaire, when suddenly news began to trickle through that the real riches were not in Alaska at all, they were near Big Dead Bear Lake. In those days they knew little of that lake, I guess, compared with what they know to-day. I have been through those parts myself, I know something of the lake, but I did not look for gold, and I don't know whether there is any there: my bones are not young enough for it!

Well, I know the trails which lead there; in Dawson they knew almost nothing about them, but the rumour spread and spread of the colossal riches of the lake, and suddenly in the saloons, in the streets, in the creeks, and everywhere they talked of nothing else but Bid Dead Bear Island.

Then some enterprising people began to try to find out what was the origin of the rumour, and who in fact took it there. They tried hard, inquired and searched till they made certain that it was the Red Indians who had talked of it among themselves. The prospectors went to them, made inquiries, and finally they found a young Indian who was able to give an account of the whole thing right from the very beginning. Listen carefully to what this young Indian told them. It was as follows:

His father and another Indian went with the Eskimos on a fishing expedition along the north-east waterway. They had done their fishing and were returning. They had been as far as Cape Columbia, at the end of the world; there they dried the fish in the sunshine to have enough food for themselves and the dogs, and when they had finished this job they went back into

the eternal waste lands of Northern Canada. They travelled a long, long way, till they came to Lost Trails. There they had to make a great detour, and got to Devil's Mountains, which they went round and slowly approached Bear's Wilderness.

But before they set off into the wilderness at one spot they said they would camp. They let the dogs run loose, made fire and cooked; when the evening came on they thought it would be a good think to stalk some game, so they went in groups in different directions: the father and the other Indian going together because they were very great friends. These two went on, looked into every cave, but found nothing alive. Suddenly they came upon a cave which looked like a paradise of stalactites. They looked, and decided that this would be a better place for sleeping than the one they had, so they went and called the Eskimos who came up at once. As soon as they saw the cave, they started to move about in it, and looked carefully in every direction. And here in this cave they discovered—what do you think? You will never believe it. They discovered there a big open lake—believe me, or believe me not.

The whole expedition camped in the cave. The Eskimos lay down at once and slept, but the two Indians talked for a long time of their future plans. They talked and talked late into the night, when suddenly a bright radiance spread over the cave. The Indians jumped up as if shot and hurried at once to the spot from where the radiance was coming. They approached stealthily till they came to the lake, and there they saw its floor was glistening all over. The

father's friend was horrified, but the father assured him that it was no miracle or charm, he advised him just to keep his mouth shut, and nobody would be any the wiser. They both lay down again as if nothing had happened, but they could not sleep until the light faded away, and that was not before dawn.

The Eskimos got up and started off on the trail, but the two Indians detached themselves from the party. They hid, and when the Eskimos could not find them they went on alone. Then the two Indians returned to the cave to find out about the lights in the lake. They racked their brains in vain trying to find out how to get down to the lake by the steep wall of rock, because they had no long ropes. They discovered, however, that the lake worked like the sea, that it ebbed and flowed, and they fixed the place clearly in their minds and moved away.

Four days later, when they had gone round Devil's Mountains, they slowly approached Bear Lake. They came right up to it, went along the shore and fished. Then they noticed that in some places there were fine yellow streaks in the sand. Gold! Immediately they went for that sand, scooped it up with their hands and found among it heaps of gold. They put it in the bags which they had with them, and worked hard for several days, only fishing when it was absolutely necessary. Then they made careful note of everything, and returned to the wilderness. Here they searched for more caves, found bones of various animals, went further, and at last came upon the tracks of the Eskimos they had deserted. These reproached them for their

treachery, but afterwards forgave them, and the whole expedition moved on. In the Rockies they went trapping, and spent the winter in huts, and in spring they travelled on again. The Eskimos set out along the Mackenzie to Herschel Island, and then home. The Indians travelled along the Arctic Circle to Alaska, and so to the Koyukuk, where they built a raft, and went down to the Yukon, where they sold their furs and went home towards Dawson city.

Well, this was the beginning of the rumour that spread through Dawson. Taken all round, those who believed it could go, if they could manage to get across the dreadful tundra, and those parts where the devil himself wishes you good-bye. The old cute prospectors, so many times deceived, were as clever as you are: they only smiled at the young man's story. But the young Indian who wanted to show that he was not lying, and that his father always spoke the truth, assured them that the story about the gold was really true, and when they still would not believe him, he showed them what he had inherited from his father: a bag full of the finest, tiniest, and purest gold, for which neither spades, nor pick-axes, nor machines were necessary, and which his father got out of the earth with his bare hands.

This was a bit too much even for the most cautious of them. They returned to Dawson with the news. There was a tremendous stir. Great Scot! At once an expedition got together to get the gold from the Big Dead Bear Lake with hands, feet, or in any other manner possible. Those who could walk would rather

throw up everything than be left behind: those who could not take part in the expedition themselves at least put money into the enterprise to have some share in the enormous future profits.

The party first provided itself thoroughly with supplies. They bought up everything: there was a terrific rush for food. To provide for three hundred people at once was no easy matter, but they managed in the end: the Indians supplied heaps of dried fish for the dogs, and at last the expedition set out in the year 1897. From there it went straight to the Mackenzie. It was a frightfully difficult journey; many people perished on the tundra before the expedition had reached the forests, but the real trials were yet to come. There the forests between the Kobuk Divide and the Mackenzie are still the thickest in the whole world, and they delayed the expedition very badly. The party had to cut its way through the trees, lynxes jumped down on them from above, inflicting very severe wounds, and in winter the wounds were very slow in healing. Soon men were lying about as if after a battle. Then those who were left got into a temper and set the forests on fire, and got a bit farther, but immediately they met with another forest, just as thick, and all they could do was to keep going on and die in their turn.

After incredible hardships they got through the forests, but then they had only reached the Mackenzie. The really bad part of the journey was still in front of them. They crossed the river and slowly drew near to Lost Trails. You know that is where there are hot springs—and then they simply did not know how to

get any farther. They had to separate and each man set off to the lake on his own. It was not the most sensible thing to do, but among such far-fetched people impatient to get to the lake, such an idea must have easily sprung up. And it was a bad time. My God! They began to sink; men were left without help; one after the other they went, lost for ever, and out of the whole expedition only a very few were left. These wandered on in vain, they did not know their bearings, and in the end they were compelled to return to Dawson.

Four people got back; I saw them myself. Four miserable men out of three hundred! Not many—do you think?—but just enough to give an account of what had happened.

All this was the result of one Indian's fairy tale. I often wondered myself when travelling in those regions why the prospectors didn't manage to get through. It seemed to me that they might have done if it had occurred to even one of them to strike a few miles further north. There there is a track where one can get along, but, in the places through which they were trying to get, they were crawling right into the devil's mouth, straight into mud. There they were absolutely helpless. That's all, chaps!

We talked with Syljean late into the night: we asked him about trails and places, and the next day we parted. He went after his muskrats, we were bound south.

I met Syljean many times afterwards, and several times more I listened to his story of the Dawson expedition. But once, it might have been the first year

after the War, Syljean was not waiting at the station. I inquired among the Indians, and they told me he was dead. We were all very sorry for him, he was such a good man, and he often helped us with advice when we were travelling, especially in the country east of the Mackenzie: he knew that part thoroughly.

After his death the trade in the skins of muskrats began to decline. In the end the price of a pelt fell to thirty-five dollars, just because the supply was not regular. To-day a few Indians hunt them occasionally.

BEARS' WILDERNESS

Our journey led further south. The worst part was still in front of us; for we had to go through a real hell before we got to the Rockies—through Bears' Wilderness.

How many dreary and inhospitable regions does one see when travelling through that country! Although I visited this wilderness at least ten times, again I remember the dreadful impression of desolation which it made upon me, and I cannot find words to describe its barren and forsaken appearance. Even to-day I remember the depression which fell on us all when in the middle of the Polar darkness we moved over those bare fields of lava, where because the soil is warm it is not covered with snow, and we had to let down the wheels which were fixed to every sledge. The bare dreary waste, where nothing grows, was coming: low rocks, corroded with water, and surrounded by solid lava. Its petrified streams were visible where they had

once flowed down the slopes of the rocks, and fallen into the lakes.

Sadness fell on us all when we drew near to Lost Trails, which we kept on our left, towards the east. Further away in that direction are the lakes which Syljean mentioned, and somewhere there is Big Dead Bear Lake; but I was never in those parts, and I would never go there alone, because I was afraid of the mountains and of the lava. There is also that warm mud in which the last remnants of the big Dawson expedition perished. Even to this day that country is only known to a few travellers and recluses.

We went on and on. We stayed the first night in that cursed waste, and were peacefully sleeping when suddenly the dogs began to howl horribly: we got up and ran about in terror. The end of the world seemed to be coming: the whole region was lit up with fire, pillars of red vapour hung over the lakes, burning lava ran with a thundering clatter into the water, and threw it into the air in all directions, hissing dreadfully. For a long time we could not decide whether we should try to quieten the dogs or pack up quickly, and, after the awful hardships of the day, set out again on the march. The whole expedition was losing its head, and it took MacDonald and some other experienced men a long time to pacify the frightened gold-diggers, and explain that there was no danger, it was only some unknown volcano which had begun to clear its throat. Slowly we quietened down, but rest and sleep were impossible.

Very exhausted we moved on and on, towards more

formidable places, towards Devil's Holes. Here the mountains stand like ramparts, boulders like blocks pile one above the other vertically upwards in strange formations. One is sometimes almost inclined to laugh when one sees how this rock is hanging over the other, and that seems as if it were only held by a thin stalk, while another is nearly broken off. Everywhere there are caves of all kinds, at the foot of the rocks there are bears' dens, which in winter are covered with sticks or stones and are not easy to see. I had heard long before how often a hunter treads on such a treacherous spot, and falls through. Sometimes the bear below does not wake, and then it is all right; but on our passage through this waste land sometimes we pulled out of a hole besides the dead bear a pulpy mass of torn furs, flesh, bones, and blood —the remains of some comrade. I myself once fell into such a den where there were several bears asleep, it was a miracle I got out again with a whole skin.

To add to the horror of that region we had to look out to prevent one another from disappearing from this world for ever.

Anyone can easily imagine what a march it was through that region. Men of the Arctic say that millions and millions of years ago the whole world fell over on that spot, that the place lay for millions of years under water, and the salt water corroded the rocks. Otherwise such absurd mountains and such caves could not have been formed. But to-day they stand at any rate on dry land, and they look like a

crowd of ghostly figures. The hunters say: "Bears' Wilderness is the devil's own!"

THE ADVENTURE WITH POPPING STONES

The daylight grew shorter, but still there was enough for us to find out way. The end of November drew near, but about mid-day the going was all right.

One day suddenly the sky did not look as it ought to, it darkened, and it seemed as if on the horizon a snow-storm was gathering. Of this Polar men are really frightened, for in such a dreadful blizzard an expedition can be completely buried in snow in a moment: big cakes of snow fly in the wind, and woe betide the man who is not sitting in a warm shelter! Polar men say that there the snow falls in such big pieces because the sky is so near the earth.

We went cautiously along the rocks, and looked everywhere for a cave in which we could hide with the dogs, and spend the night. I went in front with four trappers; suddenly we stopped, because somebody shouted that we ought to go back, someone had found shelter for the night.

We returned: there was a cleft in the rock, just wide enough to let a sledge and dogs through. We got in, and found ourselves in complete darkness. We lit our electric lamps, and what did we see! Stalactites were hanging from above, stalagmites stuck up from below, one beside the other, so that it looked as if not even a sparrow could find a place there.

"Boys," said one of us, "let's go on, there're only stalactites here, no place for us."

I said to him: "Jim, shut up! Here we are going to stay, and now! We can all get in comfortably. Let's wait for the others."

An Eskimo went out of the cave, and as the other members of the party passed, he shouted to them to stop and stay the night. The Polar men came and looked, and shook their heads; how could we all find room to sleep! But I only smiled in my beard, I knew about stalactite caves, and I knew what to do in such a case.

"Come along, come along!" I kept on shouting. "We shall all sleep beautifully!"

But how to get rid of the stalactites? We should have to smash at them for a month.

"Shut up, boys!" I said, "don't worry about that, only look out for some wood, I'll deal with the stalactites myself."

Still they hesitated, and wondered how I could break down so many thousand stalactites without help, and quickly.

"No need to worry, get off and fetch wood and water."

There was a thin wood not far away, just a tree here and there, but enough to keep a man busy for several years. They took the dogs and sledges and went for the wood. I stayed alone.

I knew how to tackle the job; I wanted to knock the stalactites down with a stick of dynamite. I usually took with me about 150 pounds of dynamite and

250 pounds of black Hercules powder, a thousand feet of fuse, and ten or fifteen boxes of detonators.

I unpacked my chest, and took out ten pieces of the strongest red dynamite, wrapped them up in newspaper, fixed up the detonator and the fuse. I then tied them all together in a sack, and bound it as tight as I could. The dynamite must not be buried in the earth, for then it has not such a good effect. The fuse was four feet long, so that four minutes after lighting it the stuff would go off. I put the sack down in the cave, lit the fuse, ran out, and waited at a safe distance behind a rock which was sticking out. After a minute or two there was a tremendous report, the rocks trembled, and stones flew out of the crater in the side of the rock; smoke followed. There was such a ringing in my ears that for two hours afterwards I could hear nothing. It was not safe to go back at once to the cave because the air in it was dreadful; but I had plenty of time, I knew that my comrades would not be back for three hours or so. I tried therefore to get all outside work finished, particularly to find a sheltered spot for the dogs, in case they could not get into the cave. I got the job done, put everything straight, and after two hours I went into the cave with a light. When I entered I could not keep from laughing at the mess the dynamite had made: for hundreds of yards in the interior of the cave there was not a single stalactite hanging properly from the roof; the whole lot were lying on the ground as if after a terrific earthquake, and in broken heaps they were piled one above the other—it was fine fun. Then I wanted to clear as

much space as was necessary for the whole party. I rolled the stones away from the front, and swept up the litter, then I knocked off the butts of any still sticking in the ground, and fixed up the stove. Well, everything was ready for the boys to come back.

When they came their eyes stuck out of their heads in amazement. They asked if I was the devil, or what, and how I had done it. But, of course, they soon found out, for they had already noticed the smell of dynamite outside. We all slept in the cave beautifully; there was room even for the dogs, and everything fell out pat; for a really terrific snowstorm broke out in the evening, but we could laugh at it, as we cosily sat and smoked round our little stove, drank tea, and coffee, and yarned. We closed the hole leading out with canvas weighted with stones, and so we were in heaven.

Next morning I went with a lamp to have a look round the cave. About five hundred yards from the entrance I found a place inside the mountain where there was red sand which we call ruby sand. When a man in the North finds ruby sand, and has at least one moment to spare, he is never satisfied until he has got a shovel, and has had a look what is in it. Often he scoops down a yard deep, for sometimes precious stones have been found in this kind of sand. So I returned for a shovel, and very slowly I threw the sand to one side and rubbed it through my fingers. I found a strange small stone, dark yellow, and as if made by sticking accurately shaped and polished bits together. I did not know what it was; for it was a mineral which I had

never seen before, so I immediately thought to myself that it might be radium, of which I had heard some talk.

I put out the lamp, and I looked to see if the stone gave off any light, but it did not, and so it could not be radium. I was rather disappointed, yet I took the little fellow, and went out to look at it in the daylight. In the meantime through the morning the storm had died away.

I wanted to know what the stone was like inside, and if there was not gold in it. Prospectors and hunters always have a look at the inside of unknown minerals; it is in our blood. I swept the snow away from a boulder, put the stone on it, and hit it hard with a hammer. Then I thought that the end of the world had come. There was such a deafening roar that I could not hear properly for a month. My comrades ran out of the cave frightened out of their wits, they thought someone must be firing with a cannon. They roared into my ears, and asked what had happened, but my ears were ringing, and I was half stunned. At last I explained everything to them, and we looked for the rest of the stone, but we could not find a speck.

The gold-diggers in our party, who were experts in minerals, had heard of such a stone, some of them had even seen it, and said it was the explosive-gas-mineral. Millions of years ago, they said, when the North was covered with active volcanoes, various little stones were thrown out of the craters, expelled by a tremendous force. When these stones were thrown

out gas was forced into them, and as they became solid, it remained enclosed. The sand which was thrown out with them is, so they said, ruby sand, and it is red just because it has been heated to such a terrific temperature. Locked inside the little stone there is a trace of gas which is enormously compressed. A bubble as big as a pin-head is enough, and produces such a report.

I don't know whether the old prospectors were right, they were just uneducated people like me, but after that I was scared of that little stone as if of a bad spirit.

Some years after this adventure I heard that some trappers had been through those regions, along an open cave with a wide passage. They hit upon it very luckily, because there was a big snow-drift along the rocks in which they would have been buried. So they let down the wheels of their sledges and went through the cave, which they knew from previous journeys was a thoroughfare. As they went with heavy sledges over the spot where the ruby sand was lying, it suddenly began popping underneath them in such a lively manner that they ran like mad, and left everything. Only after a long time did they dare to return. These trappers told us that the rocks shook as if a hundred-weight of dynamite had gone off. It must have been the devil's doing, they could not explain it otherwise. For days after that they had to make signs to one another, if they did not want to shout themselves hoarse; they were almost deaf.

I laughed heartily at them, and explained to them that it was just an ordinary stone from the time of the era of burning volcanoes.

There was then among us a hunter whom we called Mount Mike. He would not believe either me or them; he told them that perhaps some detonator had gone off and he accused me of telling stories. This set me going and I made up my mind to persuade the chap. When in the spring we were returning north, and moving through Bears' Wilderness, we went past that cave, for it lay along one of the usual routes. At that time snow was lying there in places, in others the ground was bare; wind whipped the tundra. I told my comrades to wait outside, and cook the dinner in the meantime, while I would look if I could find one of the stones in the cave. I went, and in an hour I returned with three little stones which I had dug out in the ruby sand.

"Hallo, Mount Mike," I shouted; "here it is: now we will see who is a liar and who is a fool!"

Mike looked suspiciously at the little stones, and we bet he would not get over them with a loaded sledge without something happening. Well then, I put the stones down on the ground some distance away, and Mike Mount got the dogs going, which were pulling a sledge with a load of about eight hundredweight on it: the dogs pulled, the sledge went on to the stones, and there was a terrific bang. The dogs got frightened, and started off on a mad rush over the tundra; they ran with the whole lot over ridge and hollow; Mount Mike stood there with his arms held out, shouting something, but we could not hear him; we were all deaf. We only saw how his sledge suddenly toppled over on the tundra, and how everything Mike

had: pots, furs, and stove—everything flew over the tundra in all directions, for the dogs kept on running like mad, even after the sledge had fallen over. Mount Mike set off after them, picked up his belongings here and there, while we sat on the ground and laughed till tears ran down our faces, and till we were quite helpless. I shouted after him not to worry about running any further, that nothing could fall off the sledge, there was nothing left on it. But, of course, he could not hear, and he ran till he caught up with the dogs; and then we saw from a distance how he sat on the sledge, still upside down, and swore, waving his fists at all directions. Later when we came up with his sledge we found it was broken in front.

"You had better carry the load on your back!" I shouted in Mike's ear.

He stood there clasping his hands, but I saw his distress, and I took out my tools: with a brace and bit I ran four holes on each side of the sledge, put in some screws, and two pieces of iron, and it was soon mended; Mount Mike could go on again, but, in the evening as we sat round the fire, the poor fellow kept on getting up and running about complaining: "My head, my head!"

I shouted into his ear to ask if he would like to have another little stone under the wheels. At once he began to roll up his sleeves, and I took to my heels, while all the rest laughed. For years afterwards we often talked of this little comedy, and our story always made people laugh.

It may sound incredible, but in the Far North most

of the gold-diggers and hunters know of these stones. I may not be telling anything new after all, perhaps in Italy near the volcanoes there are also similar stones. At any rate, whenever on my travels I drive past some mountain which by its shape reminds me of a volcano, I remember that ruby sand and the popping stones, and I must laugh to myself.

But let us return to our miserable journey!

We set out from the cave, and after a long march we slowly left Bears' Wilderness behind us.

Here the gold-diggers left us. We were bound for our hunting-grounds, they still further on; but the journey was already easier for them, and, besides, there were already Indian Reservations here and there, and fur farms. There the gold-diggers could easily get a team if they wanted to.

They paid us in gold. It was a tidy bit, but the job was not a small one either. We parted good friends, which means that both parties were well satisfied.

Now at last we were getting out of the Bears' Wilderness on to the last spurs of the Rockies. We still moved through open, uneven clearings where a few trees stuck out here and there. It was a dismal journey. Next to this region there are morasses which form a vast tundra, where in summer it is about knee deep in water, but at the time when we were going through they were fortunately frozen. And not until then could we see the Rockies in front of us, where we should be recompensed for all the hardships which we had to endure on the way.

IN THE ROCKIES

This region is certainly the richest in game in the whole world. Besides, they say that high up in the mountains there are valuable minerals, even gold. It is an eternal pity that the country is so inaccessible and the expenses of getting there and extracting the minerals swallow up all the profits. Otherwise great wealth could be got from those mountains. The Rockies which on the left bank of the Mackenzie fall steeply down to the river, on the right rise up to form the last spurs of the mountains. Still further east, where we also came on our expeditions, the country is very strange. There the whole land surface is covered with crevasses of which one side slopes gently down, while on the other there is a perpendicular wall. Those who are approaching from the side where the crevasse falls precipitously, often in the snow fail to realize the danger, and fall sometimes twenty yards down. Such people, of course, never hunt again in the Rockies. Very many hunters have perished in this way, and particularly prospectors who were bound for the tops of the mountains after gold, and did not know the country.

But everything comes to an end, and at last we stood in the place which was to be our home for the whole winter. Then we had first to build the huts which we call cabins. Out of trees which we felled we made strong walls, and roof, and we filled up all the crevices with moss. Doors and hinges for the windows we had with us. We always placed the windows high up so

that the animals could not get in. There was, of course, not much furniture inside: the little stove, and a simple bed with a reindeer skin. Besides the hunting equipment our most important possessions were a plate and spoon, spare underwear, and other oddments, and, of course, a good supply of provisions.

We built the cabins several hundred yards or a mile away from each other in the forest, or at the foot of the mountains. This arrangement is made so that the report of a gun can be heard from one cabin to the next in case of need or danger: for instance, if somebody is attacked by wild animals and wounded, or something else happens. A hunter may also run short of food, and then he goes to the next cabin to his comrades who help him out if they have anything to spare. Sometimes a hunter who is short of food sets off for the Mackenzie, and then if he has not enough dogs he goes round the cabins and borrows dogs from his friends.

In exchange he brings back from the Indian Reservations flour, beans, pepper, salt, and other things which his comrades then buy from him. In this arrangement the loan of the dogs is considered to be worth as much as the transport of the goods.

In the cabin there are three or four hunters: this number to a cabin, and the spacing of the cabins, is best for hunting, for it is the result of generations of experience. If the cabins were larger, or all close together, the hunters would lose much time just moving through the snow from place to place, for they can't hunt all together. When we were hunting

in Alaska, as we often did in summer, a yard more or less did not much matter, and the cabins were therefore built to hold six or eight men, and were several miles apart. For in summer there are not so many dangers, and the hunter can easily walk over to his neighbour; he need not wade through snow, or struggle with a blizzard. But in Canada in many places there are lots of wild cats which are very dangerous for hunters, for they jump from the tree straight on top of the unsuspecting hunter who happens to be passing below. We call these cats lynxes, and in some places, especially on the way from the Mackenzie along the Porcupine, towards Kobuk Divide, where one goes through North Alaska into the basins of the rivers Kobuk and Koyukuk, they are a real terror.

In the regions where there is less game or in smaller forests hunters sometimes live in cabins alone, especially if it is fairly safe. But there are some hunters who can't stand anybody near them, strange eccentrics; these always sleep alone.

We divided the work in the camp fairly between us. Some felled trees and brought home wood, others did all the cooking, because those who were hunting in the forest did not come back till the evening. The hardest job was to fell trees; but fire was absolutely essential; the stove had to be red hot all the time, and always during the night one of the hunters got up every few hours and put more wood on the fire to keep frost's fingers from clawing too near.

When on other expeditions we hunted on the actual slopes of the Rockies we did not live in cabins, but

blew out holes in the rocks with dynamite and there we lived in threes or fours. Such a hole is safer than a cabin, because when a storm rages and stones fly from the mountains, and the strong wind throws sand hissing against everything, the merciless cold gets even into the best-made cabins. After such a storm, on the other hand, we often found the bodies of animals, which not being able to find shelter in time were caught by the hurricane, and frozen to death.

We lived on the same spot the whole winter. In the morning we used to get up at three; at five in the afternoon we went to sleep. There was no fear of wolves; fires were kept burning to protect the dogs, which slept outside on canvas, and also to keep them warm. Wolves often gathered round our cabin in a circle and howled. Then our dogs also began, and with this hellish concert going on, tired as we were, we could not sleep, we rolled from side to side, and cursed all the wolves and dogs in the world.

LAYING THE TRAPS

A hunter always begins by laying traps. We laid ours about six miles away from our camp, far from where we were shooting, so that foxes, wolverines, chocholins, hares, lynxes, and havolins, and other furry animals, for which the traps were meant, were not frightened away by the reports, and did not run out of the district altogether. We always set traps near rivers or brooks where the animals came in great numbers. There was a long row of traps; they were only about two feet

away from each other. In front of the trap meat as a bait was put on the snow; to the side was a piece of poisoned flesh, but there was no poisoned meat just near the trap because hunters prefer to catch the animals alive. They can then sell them to the Indians for cross-breeding on farms.

Each trap was fixed to a chain: a piece of wood was run deep into the ground, and the chain with the trap was fastened to the stake. If the ground was hard, and the stake could not be fixed deep, and wobbled, we made a deeper and wider hole with a bigger stake, then we put the small stake into the hole and poured water in. As the water froze the stake held faster still. Animals which were trapped could throw themselves about for hours, the stake held and they never got free.

The traps were covered over with snow, and the animals which went for the bait were usually caught by the head or paw. Every third or fourth day we went to look at the traps: sometimes we clapped our hands and jumped with joy as we went round. I often thought that after all animals can't really possess all five senses, for sometimes in trap next to trap there were rare animals in plenty whose fur represented a nice heap of dollars.

But, of course, at times the disappointed hunter goes from one trap to the next; and there is nothing anywhere. Cases have been known when a hunter has caught absolutely nothing right through the whole winter, for at times an animal dies out completely, and appears in enormous numbers in another place, or in another year. Always in a cycle of four or seven

years some of the animals vanish; while eslewhere they occur in such numbers that one need not even use a gun. All one need do is just walk round and swing a club. Some of my friends caught in this way in one winter furs to the value of a hundred and fifty thousand dollars, but then, perhaps, for three or four years in succession there was almost nothing at all.

In poor seasons the return home is, of course, bitter. Many of my acquaintances would rather have shot themselves than go back with the feeling that all their labour was in vain. Some seasons I was also very unfortunate, but still I was always in a better position than the others because I earned a lot extra with my locksmith's work. This work also kept me very busy when hunting. I repaired the traps and other equipment for my companions, and for that I used to be paid in furs or foodstuffs; it was only when there were no other jobs for me to do that I set traps myself, and even shot. I was fully occupied with my locksmith's work, particularly between Christmas and February. At that time of the year the frost was terrible, and sometimes split trees into shreds, and at intervals there were Polar storms, so that altogether the weather was so dreadful that for those three months we could not go round the traps. Then we used to meet in our cabins, sometimes packed like herrings together, smoke, eat, and tell endless stories—stories which we had heard, of course, a hundred times already. At times the snow-storm raged with tremendous fury, and the snow fell in clumps as big as one's fist, so that sometimes before morning we were completely snowed

under and we had to dig ourselves tunnels to get a breath of air. Especially on the borders of the forests facing north during a snow-storm the drifts may pile up during the night twenty yards high, so that one may have a forest in front of one's nose and not be able to see it, only a slope of pure white gently rising into the void.

To guard against the worst risks three or four hunters usually combine and work together. Two expert trappers stay at home and go round the traps, two excellent shots work in the opposite direction, and shoot wolves, wolverines, and bears.

LYNXES AND WOLVES—THE TERROR OF THE WILD

Nearly every hunter has a hobby. One man can do this job well, another that. So, for instance, some only shoot lynxes, partly for their fur, which used to fetch up to sixty dollars a pelt, and partly for their delicious meat. But lynx meat is not all eaten, some of it is always poisoned and laid as bait near the traps. At this job the best men were the Indians and the Eskimos without a doubt. These people used to tie rags round their bodies to protect themselves to some extent against sudden attack from these savage beasts, then they went to the place where the lynxes were, and began to make noises which were absolutely indistinguishable from those made by the animals. The lynxes crawled nearer, and got caught in the traps set round the hunters. These hunters in some winters were very destructive; I knew one Indian who

caught in this way over six hundred lynxes in a single winter.

Wolves also kill very many lynxes, and for this reason they are a great nuisance to hunters. Often one comes across the head of a lynx all eaten away; a wolf has had the rest.

Wolves are found in Northern Canada, and especially in Alaska there are extraordinarily big packs about every five or seven years. Those which come from the Siberian mainland we call wandering wolves; they are a great trouble, especially at the end of February and in March, when they move in packs of from fifty to a hundred. At such times the Polar men throw poisoned flesh and fish about, scattering it all over. Besides this, many wolves are shot, and some get caught in traps. These wandering wolves are the worst. They mostly feed on fish thrown up by the sea, or by rivers, but they also go sometimes far north after walruses, seals, and other sea animals. There they do considerable damage. The fur of a big Siberian wolf used to have some value, making up to a hundred and ninety dollars, while the pelt of a medium-sized animal was worth from fifty to sixty dollars.

Neither wolf nor fox flesh is eaten; it is the most revolting meat I have met, but I knew of hunters who got used to this meat, and ate quite a lot. I wonder how they managed to get such nasty stuff down their throats, for it has a bitter taste, especially if it is fat. Even a dog will not touch it. As soon as a man who eats this meat comes to a village all the wolf-dogs collect round him and pass water on his legs.

Whole packs of dogs shuffle after him and water him: a man like that ought to be pitied. It is an interesting fact that if a man spreads fat from a killed she-wolf on his boots and meets a dog it will sometimes pass water on him. Farmers who eat fox meat sometimes meet with a similar experience, for the vixens again behave in the same way.

HUNTERS AGAINST HUNTERS

I really ought to say that hunters have other enemies besides the wild beasts. Their greatest enemy is again a hunter, a member, of course, of another expedition which happens to be in the neighbourhood. There was another party hunting near us, and one of the other men kept poaching on our ground. We told him to keep away, but he kept hanging about and so a quarrel began. More than once I have seen a man like that shoot one of our party in a row: then the process was short: we bent the nearest tree down with a lasso, slipped a noose round the rascal's neck, let the tree go, and the body flew up with a mighty sweep. Sometimes we had to deal with two such rascals at once, in which case we tied them up back to back, bent down two trees standing near together, and so we sent them up: as the rope tightened those two had their necks properly stretched.

Rough justice, yes, but one cannot do otherwise. A hunter has a hard life, and he has to have a hard heart to avoid being cheated of the fruits of his arduous labour. If one of our men shot a member of another

party hunting on our ground he did well. The body was left lying where it fell, the wild beasts saw to it that nothing was left in the morning. Our man was not brought up for any trial; he acted within his rights. Such are the laws of the Canadian forests. In much the same way we punished very severely the scoundrels who carried illicit brandy about the country, and gave it to the Eskimos and Indians to rob them of their furs.

HUNTING BEARS

Sometimes we hunted near gold-diggers' camps where prospectors were poking about in the rocks trying to get wealth out of them. Here those hunters did best whose special job it was to kill bears. There was always a great scarcity of food among the gold-diggers, and the hunters made great profits hawking round the meat.

Catching bears is far and away the most interesting kind of hunting in Canada; perhaps it is because one's life is more at stake. A bagged bear does not always fetch as much as a nice fox, yet clever bear hunters enjoy more respect than all other kinds of Polar men. These people must know the regions well where most bears are found, they must know their habits, and besides that they have to have a special gift for finding bears' dens underneath the snow.

There are very many bears in Bears' Wilderness, and west of the Mackenzie, in the forests towards White Horse Trail, and near the State Trail, where in winter the Post goes north to the Mackenzie. The men

who hunt bears usually move in that direction, through the desolate wilderness, looking for bears' dens, and hunting moose as well, which we call wild cows; and also looking for another similar animal, the Canadian reindeer, or caribou.

Sometimes even an experienced eye fails to recognize a bear's den, so carefully does a bear know how to cover it up from above. Sometimes one is lucky enough to find several holes near together, at another time one may discover three to four bears asleep in the same hole. If we found a bear's den in autumn or at the beginning of winter, we did not kill the bear straight away, we just marked the spot by cutting a notch on a tree. It is useless to shoot him at the beginning of his winter sleep, because he is then very fat, and the fat has a disgusting smell of fish oil. The meat smells just as bad. But at the end of the winter sleep he has used it all up, and then bear's meat is a delicious treat. Therefore we waited till spring when the bears woke up, then we watched to see in which direction the mother took her young ones for pasture, and we followed the tracks, killed the old ones, and took the young ones home, where we tamed them and taught them to pull in harness. These bears then helped their masters to drag nets with salmon in the bays of the Arctic Ocean. We took them as far as the Franz Josef Land, and they were our best helpers. A well-trained bear is extremely valuable to a Polar man, and he lives, they say, up to seventy years.

These are usually brown bears. There is also another kind of brown bear in the North which we call Sinamon,

then small Yukon bears, and Grizzlies, and the largest of all, the dark-grey Kodiaks. The Grizzly can never be tamed, and his fur is valueless, because it is immensely thick, the hair falls out, it is very unpleasant, and full of fleas and ants. Even the Indians only use it as a mat for dogs to sleep on, or they make mattresses out of it for themselves. The white Polar settlers do not care for this fur. They only shoot the Grizzly for meat. In all my life I only killed six of these bears.

Kodiaks are rare in Canada; most of them are found in the middle and south of Alaska, particularly in the neighbourhood of Mount McKinley—a gigantic mountain, the biggest I ever saw in my life. These are as big as a medium-sized horse, with black on the legs, and they have an unusually large head and ears, and very sharp teeth.

Of the brown bears which we hunted most frequently I usually shot between two and four each winter. That is not much, but enough, if one realizes that besides hunting I was very busy mending the traps. There were others who were hunting all the time and did not shoot as much as I did. One must know how to shoot, because a bear which has been missed can be very dangerous; he immediately goes for the hunter. Once in the Rockies we came across another hunting party which had just had a very sad experience. One of their men was dying; he lay on the moss, with all the others gathered round, very distressed because they could do nothing for him. He was terribly badly mangled. He was one of those

hunters who are full of advice but do silly things themselves. He had gone for a bear at close range, and shot him in the breast with an ordinary revolver. The bullet must have hit a rib, and the bear immediately threw himself on the hunter, embraced him with his awful paws, and from this embrace the hunter emerged without arms, with a squashed head, and his entrails hanging out of his body. In a few minutes he died; they buried him quickly, and set out after the bear into the mountains where he had fled. But they did not get him, although he was wounded, and although he was being followed by the best dogs they had.

A sensible hunter therefore does not do such stupid and unnecessary things, for at this job particularly prudence is the better part of valour. I shot bears preferably with dum-dum bullets from a Remington double-barrelled gun. These bullets, which we call 30/44, make awful wounds, and the hunter can, in fact, aim wherever he likes. It is enough if he just grazes the foot, the wound is as big as a gate, and the bear can't attack at all, so that at the worst he is soon finished off with another shot.

Bears go to sleep at the end of November, sometimes as late as December. Always if we saw a bear then, we followed him to find where he was making for, where his lair was. As I have said, we never shot him before winter was over. I often saw a bear on the bank of a river, or on the seashore where the water threw up salmon, walking on two feet as he gathered up the fish and carried them into his hole. He took an armful

of salmon at once, and balancing on his hind legs he looked like a funny old man.

The main hunt for bears begins at the end of February, or the beginning of March, when they come out after their winter sleep. But the bear does not go far from his hole at once, he first looks what the weather is like: he pokes about near the hole, and sometimes he crawls in again. If the weather is good he at once begins to hunt; but if there is still too much snow, he goes back to his hole. The Grizzly and Kodiak in particular, hang about for a long time in the lair, for these giants sink deep into the snow. At this time of the year they are very dangerous, and it is not advisable to have anything to do with them. But the hunters follow cautiously on the bear's tracks, and stick together. They search at the foot of the rocks where most of the dens are, and if they find a track they immediately know what kind of bear is inside. The Sinamon and the brown bear make almost the same kind of footprints, those from the Yukon are smaller, but the Grizzly and Kodiak with very similar footprints move quite differently, and their tracks are easily distinguished. Their footprints are big and circular.

If the hunters find a bear's den in spring and the animals are still asleep, they collect wood, pile it up in front of the den, cover it over with trees above and at the sides, to send the smoke into the den, and then they set the heap on fire. The smoke rolls into the den, the hairy one wakes up and looks round to see how to escape; then the hunters pull down the framework

over the pile, the frightened Teddy rushes out through sparks and flames, gets burnt, and is shot while still confused. One could, of course, shoot him in the den, but sometimes it is a great sweat to pull the animal out; the hunters arrange therefore for him to do the job himself before he is killed.

Otherwise a bear looks a very good-natured animal. I used to laugh heartily as I watched bears collecting fir cones and eating them! These animals eat fish, grass, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, young twigs, leaves, moss—almost anything. It is an interesting fact that a bear does no harm to moose, and caribou are safe with him as well. These animals, therefore, stick to the bears when they move in autumn from the Canadian mountains down to the forests; and they say that in this way they are protected against wolves. That is why hunters follow the tracks made by bears in autumn, partly to make certain where they will hibernate, and partly to shoot moose and caribou at the same time, especially near gold-diggers' camps, where there is an excellent market for all the meat.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH A BEAR

Among Polar hunters there are some, especially Alaskan and Aleutian Indians, who perform horrible tricks when hunting bears. Particularly if our expedition was big, with a hundred members or so, the Indians always wanted to show off their skill and daring. One of these men puts on the skin of a forest bear, on his head he has a fur mask, bearskin gloves

on his hands, and round his chest he fastens firmly a strap from which two long, sharp knives stick out; he holds similar knives in both hands. If the expedition finds a bear, or a whole group, especially near springs where the animals come to drink, the hunters form a semi-circle, then they move forward, and slowly the outer wings close in so that in the end the bears are completely surrounded. They soon scent danger, and try to get away. Then from the line of hunters one of these men rushes out, with lowered head, directly in front of a bear, and blocks his way. The furious animal throws itself on him in its characteristic attitude, standing on its hind legs, and embraces the hunter with its front paws. In this embrace the two knives on the strap stick into the bear's chest, and at the same moment the daring hunter sticks the other two knives into the animal's belly, till the intestines come rolling out, and the bear falls over. I witnessed these entertainments frequently, and I was stiff with fear, and had to turn away when the Indian disappeared completely in the bear's embrace. In the year 1908 we once ran across a group of thirty bears which were just drinking at a spring. Some young Indian hunters set out against them with this equipment: they were very highly skilled in hunting bears, but otherwise simple men of unknown names, and of unknown destiny. In ten minutes all the bears were rolling in blood: not a single Indian was wounded. I never saw an Indian have to pay for this trick with his life, or even with a severe wound. I myself, of course, would rather think twice before embarking on such a mad enterprise: it is

quite enough if the knives slip; then not even the skin of a Polar bear will save the hunter. It is true that at any sign of danger the others can shoot, but in a second the Indian's head may be a pancake, and his chest, or belly, a torn sack. Thanks very much! I once got a slight box myself from a young bear, a mere scratch, but the clothes on my chest were torn to rags, I was full of blood, and I walked as if unconscious for everything turned in my head.

When hunting bears there is another custom which I found very disgusting. When a bear is shot, and falls, the hunters run up, cut a vein in its neck, and catch the spurting blood in a small sack made from the skin of a young seal. Out of this sack they drink the blood. Even in 1903 I felt completely sick when I thought that I might have to drink that nasty fluid, but my comrades said:

"You are a nice hunter, you don't know anything, and you can't do anything, if you don't drink bear's blood!"

"Let me alone," I told them, "it makes me sick."

"But just try!"

So once I gave in and tasted. It tasted like fish oil and disagreed with me horribly. But I mastered myself, and quietly swallowed it. Then after half an hour my stomach began to turn, I had to hide in the wood, and there I vomited nothing but blood. After that I never again tasted a drop of that disgusting liquid.

When hunting Polar bears there is a similar custom, but the stuff is just as nasty as with brown bears.

THE SINAMON BEARS ON THE NEW SIBERIAN ISLANDS

With us in the North on the New Siberian Islands bears were very scarce, except Polar bears; but a strange thing once happened on the island called Valja.

As usual in autumn I was delivering provisions with our boat to the settlers on the islands, but as it happened the hunter to whom I went was not at home, and so, as usual in such cases, I spread the goods on the ground in front of his cave, covered them well with canvas, and weighted it down all round with stones so that the wind would not blow it away. Later in spring, when we met with the other hunters, the man told me what had happened. He came home, he said, and saw that I had been there, and had left the provisions together with a list of everything I had brought, and the bill. He checked it, and found that a sack of flour and a sack of beans were missing. He wondered whether I had not made a mistake, but he noticed some tracks about, for he was an old hunter, who used to hunt in Canada, and he realized at once they were the tracks of a Sinamon bear. He was quite flabbergasted, because never before on that island had anyone seen a Sinamon bear. He followed the track, and soon he found on the tundra a white powder, the spilt flour.

"Aha!" he said to himself.

He went back to fetch a gun.

"That will cost you your life, old chap!" he grumbled to himself, as he stumbled along on the floury trail.

Without any difficulty he found a hole in the rocks to which the track led: he peeped inside with his gun ready, but there was no bear; instead he found both his sacks, and very little flour had been spilt. He carried the sacks home, but in spite of that made up his mind that the thief should not escape alive. He lay in wait for him for several days, but in vain. He slowly forgot about the whole affair; winter came, and went, and then one day, when the Polar storms were over, he remembered the thief again and went to look if by any chance he was asleep in the hole where he had taken the sack. He could hardly find it in the snow, so artfully had the bear covered it with stones.

When the hunter saw that the bear was sleeping there, he quietly raked away the snow, silently took away the stones, and looked inside. Three bears were snoring there! He stood to one side and shot the nearest: he aimed a second time, and shot the second; then the third woke, sat up on its haunches, and rubbed its eyes with its front paws. It also got a bullet.

"So I have got you three, boys, for two sacks," said the satisfied hunter. He now had some hundredweights of excellent meat; so the thievish bear brought him good luck.

To explain this strange case we thought that the bears had gone to the island over the ice, tried to leave before winter, but were too late, and had therefore made a den there. I never heard of any other case, before or after.

The hunters are certain that if a man is asleep, a

bear, especially a Yukon bear, will not do him any harm. Such cases do happen, they say, on the Yukon and Mackenzie. An acquaintance of mine, a man called Krist, a German, told me that he once fell asleep near Dawson, and woke just when a small Yukon bear was sniffing round him. He quickly closed his eyes and pretended to be asleep. The bear sniffed at him for a while and then disappeared. But brown bears and Sinamon bears are dangerous, they say, even if a man is asleep, while I need not explain what a Grizzly or Kodiak will do. But from my own personal experience I can't be certain, for, thank God, I was never visited by a bear while I was asleep, nor did I ever see such a thing happen.

BEAR ON THE MENU

Bear's meat is the greatest treat a Polar man can have. But not always; those who do not know how to prepare the meat well never find out what delicious food it is. Perhaps I might say that I am an expert in preparing the flesh of all kinds of bears. I always cared for good food—Oh yes!—and every time I made up my mind to do my best to prepare the meat in the best possible way, because for several months it is the only food one has to live on.

When a hunter kills a bear he first looks at his teeth to see how old it is. If it is an old chap he only skins it, chops up the flesh, and cooks it for the dogs; for it is so tough that even if it is boiled continuously for two days it is still as tough as leather. But if the bear is

young, he skins it and hangs the flesh on a tripod. He cuts pieces from the breast, and the hams; the rest is chopped up and boiled for the dogs. The hams, which, of course, are of considerable size, are then cut into slices about an inch and a half thick, and the slices are hung out and left to dry. They hang for about six weeks. The meat shrinks so much that when all the slices from both hams hang side by side they are hardly a yard thick. Then when the meat is dry it is taken down. The bacon from Japanese pigs is then cut lengthwise—it looks like long, thin ribbons—and the ribbons are wound round the slices, and pinned with small nails. Then when the bacon has been wrapped round the slices it is pulled together with wire and the nails are taken out. The slices with the bacon are then smoked for days in the smoke from the wood of the Siberian birch. As soon as the meat has been smoked the hams are cut into pieces and then pickled in a barrel. Water is poured in, a pinch of salt is added, vinegar as well, along with dry apples, dry plums, and various spices, to suit individual taste. The barrel is then nailed up with a board, turned on its side, rolled over several times and then stood up on end. The meat is left in the barrel for about six weeks: the longer it stays in pickle the more it swells. Usually late in the season, when I was already in my cave in New Siberia and felt like having a good time, I took the meat out of the barrel, and put it into lukewarm water to soak out the pickle. I left the meat in the water for the night, in the morning I poured the water away, and added fresh, this time boiling hot. In this

way I got rid of the sour flavour. Then again I washed it in luke-warm water, and put it in a pot, added lard and onions, and stewed the meat. I put a bit of butter in a frying-pan: we kept it there in barrels of from fifty to a hundred pounds: I fried the butter, added caraway-seeds and continued until the pieces of meat were lightly done; then I put them back in the pot and stewed again. The meat was then a beautiful brown colour. After that I made a gravy out of cream, various spices, tomatoes, and Worcester sauce—about two or three spoonfuls for the whole lot.

At last the dinner was ready, and after smacking my lips for many weeks I could sit down to the feast. Such a dinner cost a nice few dollars—Great Scot!—but it was such a treat that here in Europe I must not even think of it. I often ate a huge pot at one sitting without a stop. Sometimes I ate three bears in a month.

CATCHING ANIMALS WITH POISON

We had special traps for bears, much bigger than those with which we caught foxes, havolins, chocholins, skunk, and wolves. The beasts which we trapped for their fur we usually poisoned with strychnine or arsenic. As soon as an animal falls it ought to be skinned, because soon after poisoning green and yellow spots appear on the skin. The poisoned animal after being skinned is put in a warm place, and left lying over night so that the poison works it way all through the flesh. Then the carcass is cut into pieces, and the flesh is strewn outside as bait for other animals

like wolves and foxes. Sometimes when a beast is taken from a trap after some days, especially in the coldest part of the year when it is impossible to get out of the cabins, bluish markings appear underneath; then the fur has to be cleaned and dyed straight away, but the price it fetches is never as high as that for a clean one.

If we managed to catch them alive we took foxes, wolverines, havolins, chocholins, skunk, and other animals with valuable fur, to the Indian farms. An animal which is born in April or May is allowed to grow until the winter, when it develops its first beautiful coat. Such an animal must be kept through the whole winter, but it must not be fed too much, only just enough to keep it alive. If the animal gets fat the fur falls off, and soon the skin is worthless. Hunters and traders in furs get from the States a survey catalogue which contains estimates of the world demand for particular kinds of fur, and of the American market in particular. According to these catalogues we gave advice to the farmers who bred and crossed the beasts.

MUSKRATS

Another animal with very valuable fur is caught in an entirely different manner. It is found in large numbers, especially in Northern Canada on some parts of the tundra. It is the muskrat, the same animal as the solitary Syljean used to hunt. It is an ugly beast, about two feet long, with a body like a rabbit and a head

like a rat, but it has a beautiful grey fur. This animal lives mostly on the tundra where there is only lichen and sand. In contrast to other animals these are hunted in summer; in winter their hair is long and easily falls out, and the skins are only valuable if the hair is short and fast. From these furs expensive gloves are made for rich ladies, and they are sold mainly to America and England. With us in New Siberia there were also a few of these rats. We caught them merely for making gloves for ourselves. They are caught in a simple but ingenious way. They live in colonies, and have extensive underground burrows with two exits; specially trained dogs scent them out; at one hole the hunter fixes a cage, and into the other he pours water. The rats run out, and are caught in the cage. These animals are frightfully wild, and when the cage with them inside is taken home on the sledge, they run about like mad. For fun we used to push a piece of wood into the cage, which irritated them, and with one snap they bit it in two. If he was at all careless a hunter often lost his finger catching these rats: I remember quite well in 1913 on the New Siberian Islands five men died of blood-poisoning after having been bitten by them.

Back at the cabin the cage is emptied into a tub of water. Men in the Arctic wear gloves made of this animal's fur over silk ones, while on top they wear reindeer gloves; so that a Polar man's hand is well protected against the cold. Sometimes, of course, not even three pairs of gloves are sufficient; frequently all the fingers get frozen in the terrible cold. When the

hunter is shooting, he pulls off the reindeer gloves, which hang on a string slung round his neck, and then he can shoot, because the fine rat glove clings to his finger so well that he can touch the trigger as if he had no glove on at all. Hunters wear silk gloves in regions where they are in touch with the business world: there one can buy various paraphernalia, but, of course, recluses who live in the forests don't wear them.

Some hunters again wear gloves of pole-cat, but these are not so good as those of muskrat. A pole-cat is about as big as a rat. It is caught in March or at the beginning of April when its fur, which costs up to twenty-five dollars, is very fine. About the same time we also caught another, still smaller animal, a kind of weasel. This little white animal is unusually brave. It attacks rabbits, hares, and other animals, and I have heard that even a man died because the beast stuck its teeth right into his neck. This weasel lives in holes like muskrats, and we caught it in a similar way, only the cages were smaller. A skin was worth ten dollars. The flesh is also used. It is remarkably good. The only pity is that the animal is so small.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN KING

As one would expect on the expeditions which we undertook there were so many different adventures, which were sometimes so unusual, that only by them can I remember what happened in such and such a year. So, for instance, I still remember our big expedi-

tion in the year 1907, when we were a party of many white hunters, and forty Eskimos. We landed at Herschel Island, and set out as usual up the Mackenzie to Bears' Wilderness, and into the Rockies. There we built our cabins, and from there small groups made long trips in different directions, so that the various parties were sometimes sixty miles away from each other. It often happens that on such a trip one comes across places where the foot of man has never been before, or only very seldom.

This happened to two of our friends. They went a long way deep into the forest to set traps, but they were caught in a snow-storm, and they could not follow their own trail back, because it was snowed over, so they had to strike off through the forest. As they returned, they set traps in places, and suddenly to their amazement they saw a small cottage under a rock. A very creepy feeling came over them when they caught sight of the cottage and of the piles of wood and fish beside it. They saw at once that it was inhabited. It seemed still more strange to them because they knew that part of the forest very well, and that no man ever lived there. They tried to find out who was there but they found no one.

They went away, and looked after their traps: there was nothing anywhere, a very strange and unusual thing. But what were they to do! They again set out for the lonely cottage. As they were approaching in the evening they saw smoke circling round the chimney: the man was at home. They both stopped outside the door, and, according to the custom in the North,

they clapped their hands, which means that people are outside with peaceful intentions. But the man did not hear the clapping and did not respond. One of the hunters, therefore, took out a revolver and shot into the air.

The door flew open: an old man rushed out with a gun and the hunters put their hands up in haste. For a moment he looked at them steadily. The two hunters saw that he was very negligently dressed, a recluse; his beard and hair were immensely long. Although he was already very old, it was obvious at first glance that because of his experience, and courage, he would be very dangerous to everybody who threatened him; but they had no wish to do that, and so they called out:

"Put your gun away, we haven't come to rob or murder you! We're both honest hunters, and we earn our living by hunting here."

The old man looked at them for a while trying to size them up. Then he smiled a bit, and put his gun down.

"So come in!"

The hunters went into the cottage, and looked round. There was nothing there, not even a stove, only a hole in the ground for the fire-place. It was clear that the old man lived there just like the solitary Eskimos, as is often the case with such eccentric people. That was quite clear from the very first moment, but now they observed that the old man was not wearing any underwear, which in those parts is usually made from the fur of muskrats or pole-cats. He wore his coat of fur directly on his bare body, dirty and ragged.

They noticed that they had just disturbed him as he was getting ready for supper, and to their surprise he invited them to have a bite with him.

"We should like to," they said, "but we have no time to spare. We're divided into twos, and there is a whole party of us; some of us are miles away, and we all want to get together as soon as possible. We shall have to go soon."

He shook his head.

"But you ought not to come here for game. Nobody ever comes here, and if anyone caught all the animals here I should have to carry my old bones somewhere else."

The two hunters assured him that he need not worry.

"It is not us who catch your game, we set traps, but catch nothing."

He laughed aloud. He said he had been hunting there for many years, and had caught almost all the game round about, and now he was the only person who could get any because he knew where to find the animals which were left.

He then asked them where they were from; and when they told him that they were born in America and had been in the country for twenty years he waved his hand. That was nothing, he said. He had been there for more than sixty years.

"And how old are you?"

"I was twenty-three when I came, and now I am eighty-four." He also told them that he had never bought any food, he caught and shot everything

himself. He ate only soup and meat. The hunters were astonished at that, and said that it was impossible, but the old man said that they had only to ask the Indians if they did not want to believe it: the Indians from the neighbouring reserves would confirm how long he had been living there, for he had lived for four generations of Indians on the Mackenzie.

"And where did you come from?"

With a whaler from Siberia, he said. In those days it was a sailing ship. The old man was from Lithuania, he signed on for the boat, and for two years he lived in northern waters. Afterwards he got fed up with the job, left the boat at Herschel Island, set out along the Mackenzie, and lived on fish for two years. After that he went into the big forests of Canada, and found the place where he was still living. In summer he went to the lakes north of Great Dead Bear Lake to get fish for winter. He told them that he only saw a white man about once in five years. They were the missionaries with whom he bartered furs for spices, and then again he retired into solitude. Until a short time before he had hunted with spears and arrows, but at last he bought modern guns from the missionaries. As a matter of fact, they were not particularly modern, but one can say at least that they were guns.

He went on talking about his experiences; he was obviously in very good humour and he wanted to show them how long his hair and beard were. He was more than six feet, himself, and when he let his hair down it trailed on the floor for a couple of feet. His beard reached to his knees.

The hunters then stayed with the old man, whom we afterwards called Rocky Mountain King, or simply King, longer than they had intended. They even had supper with him, but on condition that he would go to their camp so that the others could see him.

We were already together and impatiently waiting for these two. It was no joke, the camp was restless, for it already looked as if we should have to set off after them. Then suddenly they appeared with an enormous fellow between them. They brought King along. At once we all gathered round, and they began straight away to explain how they had found him. King only talked Lithuanian and Russian; with the Indians he talked their own language; and if our men could not understand these languages it was not easy for them to converse with him. In spite of that we had a good chat, and we tried to get out of him as many interesting things as possible, so that we should have something to talk about ourselves later on, and so we asked him:

"Well then, you have been living here for so many years: lots of things must have happened to you during such a long time: tell us something about them."

We thought that we should learn of many adventures, such as every hunter and gold-digger meets with by the score. But the old man mused for a while and then declared that, on the whole, nothing unusual had happened to him in that region all the time he had been there, everything was as it always had been. Only he said that when he first settled there he was more annoyed by bears.

The hunters jumped at this, and begged him to tell them where to find bears so that they could get enough meat. King said it was very easy and that the next day he would take them himself.

The next day we set out for a certain rocky place and the whole of our party slowly concentrated there. Even the Eskimos came as well who were camped several miles away from us further down towards the north. King stayed in the centre. He moved with us and showed us different places, here a hole, there a hole, all carefully covered either with stones or branches so that anyone who did not know of them would not be able to find them, unless by some ill chance he happened to fall into one. King showed us how near we could go to a hole without falling through, and then he made a sign to us to move the stones away carefully. We had seen many bears' holes before, but these were so cleverly covered with stones that we asked King how a bear could possibly put them together so well alone. King said that that was nothing: he himself had seen much better tricks. He said that he had seen bears build real huts if they could not find a hole in the ground for their winter sleep. And they were so clever at building that a man could not do better.

He showed us more places, and then he left us saying that he had already lingered with us too long.

Just then one of the bears awoke and began to scramble out of his den. Perhaps our voices had roused him: sometimes a bear when hibernating sleeps so soundly in his lair that the report of a gun will not

wake him; at other times he crawls out at the slightest disturbance. This bear then crawled out quite unexpected. He stuck out his head through the hole, pulled down a bit of the stony wall with his paws, but he could not get out very easily because the hole was over two yards deep. We waited, for in such cases we didn't shoot the bear until he had scrambled out of the hole, to save us the hard job of dragging him out. The bear then slowly began to crawl out; he was already half-way out of the hole when he fell back again with a thud. We knew that he would try again, but this process was too slow for us, and we were beginning to get bored, so we dropped down into the den the trunk of an old tree. On it the bear climbed out.

We stood in a semi-circle and waited to see what would happen next. We expected that he would throw himself on one of us, but to our amazement he sat down on his hind legs, and with his front paws he rubbed the sleep from his eyes. After that he tried to get away from us, but just then—bang! Teddy rolled over.

We peeped into the hole, and we saw that there was still another bear inside. He was fast asleep, he lay on his side with twigs and moss underneath. We did not wake him, we shot him in his sleep.

We went on like this, following the instructions King had given us, and that day we shot eight bears. That was an enormous bag. A skin is only worth from forty to sixty dollars, it is true, but we had heaps of meat as well, which we knew would be excellent, as by then the bears had digested their fat, which smells horribly

of fish. We took some of the meat with us, and some we left there, intending to return for it later.

A few days afterwards we called on King in his hut and thanked him for his good advice. We praised him for knowing the forest so well, and then the old man, obviously moved by our flattery, confided to us another of his secrets. He said that he knew of animals similar to wolverines, which live underground and never come out. He promised to take us to their burrows, and he fulfilled his promise a few days later. We set out for the place; the hunters walked about setting traps; King only looked round and kept silent, but when he saw that we were poking about fruitlessly he decided to help us. He stuffed up several holes and at another he set a trap. Our people then set traps in other places in the same way. Very soon King caught an animal as big as a fox, grey, and with a long snout. One of our party was also lucky, and so we had two live animals, over which a long debate took place as to what to do with them. At last we decided that we should take them alive to San Francisco where we would offer them to the Zoological Gardens. King announced that it would be better to kill them because their fur was valuable but we begged him not to. Two hunters were chosen to take the animals to San Francisco; there they sold them both, and returned the following winter. That winter I was not with the same expedition, but all who took part in it told me that they again met King in that locality, who among other topics turned the conversation to those animals.

"How much did they give you for them?"

Both hunters were loyal in their lying; King could not possibly know what the animals were worth, for he had lived such a long time alone, so both hunters made long faces, and said that they did not get even their expenses back.

"But you must have got at least twenty-five thousand dollars."

The hunters were dumbfounded with amazement. King had got the value of animals exactly right. He explained afterwards that some years previously missionaries had told him what they were worth. The hunters immediately offered to give him foodstuffs and anything he required; but he would not take anything. They told him that they would stay with him and help him, but he replied that he was used to solitude and that he liked best to be alone.

The rest of the story about Rocky Mountain King I know only from many yarns told by others. It is absolutely incredible, but certainly true, because I heard the same thing from many different people.

King had another big secret. He knew of flints with veins of gold in them which lay on the surface in the mountains; he also knew of other minerals, and he would have taken his secret with him to the grave if there had not been two clever scoundrels who knew how to turn his head completely. Although it was not easy they managed to gain his confidence by a small trick which succeeded because of the old man's simple-mindedness. King was quite certain that the loadstone which was on the surface of ground attracted his traps, so that they did not shut quickly enough,

and the game escaped. He also thought that it was becoming more difficult to transport things with sledges because of this loadstone, and not because of his increasing age. Two prospectors who heard from the Indians that King knew various secrets of the mountains promised the old man that they would get rid of these troubles if they covered the places where the loadstone occurred with earth and stones.

In this way they easily got the secret from the grateful old man. He then showed them where the gold was, and secured only a negligible share of the gain himself, while he even helped the gold-diggers with his own hands; in fact he became so badly infected with gold-fever that he lost interest in hunting and in his old age he turned into a gold-digger. He declared that he was tired of hunting game: he had been doing that long enough; and so both gold-diggers and King, their new, not very young, or very strong, assistant, worked very hard, and in the autumn, when they had collected a fine heap of gold, they decided to go to San Francisco to sell it. Old King was looking forward to seeing the world again; he packed up all the furs still left from the time when he was hunter, and the three of them set out for Herschel Island, and round Alaska to the huge town.

They arrived safely, and took their gold to the bank. They saw it weighed, and they then had to go to the cash desk. King was not sharp enough, and suddenly both his companions had vanished. From their colossal find King was left without a cent, and what was worse he had not even enough to get back to his hut.

Fortunately he had the furs, which had not been stolen and he sold them. In this way he got plenty of money, and so had not to worry that he would die of hunger, and he strolled about San Francisco hoping to run across his two companions. Then suddenly in his hotel he received a letter and a big parcel. In the letter his two friends wrote that they wondered where he had gone while they were selling the gold; they had looked for him everywhere and could not find him. They would not like him to think that they had cheated him and therefore they were sending him bonds to the value of a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. These were supposed to be shares in their joint mining concern, which they had just founded as a big company to mine gold, and they were paying out his share in bonds.

The bonds looked like big banknotes; they were beautifully printed, and King, who had never held such marvellous things in his hands before, jumped for joy because he was now a rich man.

He soon got another letter instructing him to go north and work up the price of the bonds. King did not understand what he had to do, but since they asked him he started at once, in his own way, to work up the price of the shares. This did not take long. Both gold-diggers arrived as well. They flourished their bonds, and rumours spread of King's wealth until even the Indians heard of it. They were very well received; everyone was anxious to help them, and they began straight away to work the gold-field. King put more money into the enterprise; it all helped to swell the value of the bonds.

But one autumn day both gold-diggers vanished, and took the best gold with them. They went under the pretext that they were going to buy foodstuffs. King and his Indians looked for them, but they learned that the two fine fellows had gone with a heavy load in a motor boat down the river. There was no doubt that they had made off with the gold. Well, if they had, they had. It was no good crying over spilt milk; perhaps it was all for the good. The only trouble was that neither King nor the Indians who had been engaged had any food or any gold. And so King decided to buy provisions with his bonds. He set off down the mountains to the river, where he found a trading boat, and tried to buy things, but when he showed his bonds the captain only laughed. He explained to King that his bonds were just pieces of rag without any value at all.

Old King worried terribly because in his old age he had been cheated so badly and reduced to poverty. Three months afterwards he died. They said he died of fever, but I think he died of disappointment.

FINLANDER KID

In my reminiscences I must not forget a man whom we came across the very same year just after we had parted with the gold-diggers beyond Bears' Wilderness. We were almost at the foot of the mountains when we noticed tracks which we recognized at once. They belonged to a wandering hermit, a very old nomad, probably the oldest inhabitant in Canada—Finlander

Kid. My companions recognized the tracks at a glance, for nobody had such a team as that old hunter. And after some time we overtook the peculiar caravan: it was led by a man who was talking with the animals as if they were human beings: he had three sledges, the first, heavily laden with ammunition and other things, was pulled by two brown bears; behind, one bear pulled a sledge carrying the tent and clothing; and the third sledge with food was also harnessed to a brown bear.

The old man travelled completely alone. We knew that he was a hunter who had no home at all, and who only possessed what he took with him. And his expeditions were as daring as they were long. He went as far North as the eightieth degree, right up to Cape Columbia, over the islands and frozen sands, where many an explorer has perished. There he used to catch fish, and in some years he went as far as Greenland. At other times he wandered as far as Grinsbay, and he knew the country round Great Dead Bear's Lake, for he always returned that way to the Mackenzie from the islands to the north of Canada. Then for a time he would live in the Rockies; all at once he would vanish again, making his way down the Mackenzie to Herschel Island, and over the frozen sea, they said, to the New Siberian Islands—but I myself never saw him there—to Bears' Islands, the river Anadyr, and St. Lawrence Island. Or again he moved about in the regions round the Bering Straits. From there he went to Alaska, to the Kobuk, and then again into the Rockies. It is a waste of time to enumerate all the

places where this man had been. They said that he used to come regularly to the Mackenzie when the boats of the Hudson Bay Trust and Trading Co. were lying at anchor there. He used to sell furs to them, otherwise he did his best to avoid civilization.

We overtook him, and exchanged greetings. He was a very old man. He was then a hundred and three, but he had the strength of a man of forty. He was of small size, a Fin by origin, and the only outstanding thing on his dress was a bag which he carried fastened round his neck by a tape. It was a queer bag, an unusual one, for old Finlander Kid carried in it his remarkably long hair and beard to keep them from getting in his way when he was working or on the march.

At once we asked him where he was coming from, and where he had been, and when we discovered that we were going in the same direction we made a combined party and moved together with him into the mountains.

I had heard long before stories of Finlander Kid and how during all the seventy-five years he had been living in the North he had never been ill for a moment. I had heard that his hand still did not shake at the report of the gun, although it was shrivelled with age; and I now noticed that the old man could still see distant objects fairly well without glasses. I wore glasses myself, and so he turned to me and asked if anyone present had spectacles to spare, for he began to need them. I asked him if I might give him mine, for I had another pair. I put them to his eyes; he looked

through them, smiled, and said that they suited him perfectly. So I gave them to him, together with the case.

"But how much do I owe you?" he asked.

"I am giving them to you as a souvenir, it is an honour for me!" I said to him.

Kid was so pleased that he did not know what to do. He offered me various things instead, anything he happened to have, but I did not want anything. I knew that he seldom came near enough to civilization to be able to buy spectacles for himself.

We went on. Kid led the way because there was no man among us who knew the route better. When we camped at night Kid told us of his wanderings. Once he even yielded to our entreaties and showed us the contents of the bag round his neck. He took out his wonderful hair and beard. In all my life I have never seen anything like it, and I never shall. His hair was over four yards long. He first took hold of his beard at the end and held his arms out. It fell from his chin down and reached the ground in a curve. Then he let his hair fall down on the ground; he trod on it; then he threw it up over his arm, and still it touched the ground, and trailed a bit as well. When we saw that we all had the greatest respect for him.

On the way we all took such a fancy to him, for he was an unusually nice man, that we were sorry when he did not want to stay with us and announced that he would hunt by himself. He said to us: "I can't stand people round me, and in a cabin I should never be able

to sleep with another man there as well. I think I should go mad, I should have to kill him!"

So he started on his way, he went a bit further and moved into his cabin with his only companions, his four bears, who slept with him, and to whom he told all his troubles and the story of his life as if they were men. Throughout the whole of his life he had had only bears, never dogs. He tamed new ones himself if one of them died. Sometimes he travelled in parts where they were brown bears, and often a she-bear quietly joined his team and went along with him. Kid did not mind as long as the wild bears did not attack his tame ones, but if he noticed that they were not so friendly he shot them. His tame animals, so it seemed, were grateful to him for his protection and good treatment, and never let him down.

For a time Kid lived at quite a distance from us, but in a few days, when he had his small household in order, he came back to our camp and asked for me. I had told him before that I was a locksmith and carried almost the whole outfit with me to mend my comrades' traps. In fact, right from the very beginning of that expedition I had had so much work to do that I had done very little shooting. My anvil always rang, I was mostly engaged in fixing springs which got loose in the traps. Kid looked round until he discovered the place where I lived with an Irishman, Frank Bernard. The Eskimos who were in our party had their huts just next to our cabin. One of them brought him to me. Kid brought traps, and he saw that I had with me gimlets, hammers, tongs, in short, all the essential

tools. He was so pleased at what he saw that he jumped for joy, and shouted: "I've never seen a man like you before: I've never seen anyone who had so many tools with him!"

To that I replied: "It's been my job since I was young. I still find it very useful."

"I want to do business with you! What about mending my traps?"

I said: "I'll do it with pleasure and cheap. I'll mend all your traps for the respect which I have for you, because you have been here for seventy-five years; compared with you I'm only a greenhorn here."

Kid then said that like him I was a true son of the Golden North: it was true he had no money but he would pay for everything in furs.

He did not stay with us, he went home again to get other traps ready while the first lot were being mended. He soon returned again when those he had brought first were ready. You should have seen how pleased the old man was! The Eskimos stared at him in amazement, and wondered if he had not gone mad, because he danced about and shouted so much. I told them he was one of the great northern gods to whom they ought to pay homage. The Eskimos did what I told them, not only because they were stupid but because of his enormous beard, and his saintly appearance. And as the fun got better I called all the Eskimos together and told them to take out their musical instruments and play. They played, and Kid suddenly began to dance like a youngster. But he did not dance like the Siberian Eskimos; he only knew the Alaskan

dances, but in spite of that he got on well with our musicians. The Eskimos enjoyed it hugely, and really accepted him as one of their gods. They told him that in case he wanted their help he should call them, they would do whatever he wished. But Kid was a man who never asked anything from anybody. He was too proud for that, and what he could he always did for himself.

After some time Kid came again to fetch his traps and bring another lot to be mended. The job was soon over, for it did not take much time. Some springs I had to put double because the old ones were already completely gone. The traps which were useless I replaced with new ones, for I had a lot of new traps in store. The old man had about seventy traps, but fifty of them were in such a state that I would not have dragged them with me, I should have thrown them away long ago. But he had to be content with them, for on his travels he had no opportunity to buy others. In the small lonely stations which he visited now and then they had not the kinds he wanted; instead they had various traps for wolves, and bears, but none for foxes and wolverines which have smaller feet.

I had the last lot of Kid's traps ready quite a time but he did not come; he was unable to, for the Polar storms and darkness set in, and everybody had to stay at home. But in March, when Nature had quietened down, as slowly the days got longer, and the sun began to shine, Kid appeared quite unexpectedly. By then he had caught very much game, and he brought furs for me to the value of over five thousand dollars, for

mending his traps. I looked at the furs, estimated their value, and then told Kid that I could not take so much in payment, nobody ever paid me anything like as much for a similar job, and if he wished to pay me well furs for a thousand dollars would be quite sufficient.

One thing was certain: the traps which I had repaired for Kid would not have cost more than forty dollars if I had bought them new in the States. But with us everything, especially work, was valued at Polar prices, and these were very high.

Kid insisted that I should take the furs; it was no work for him to catch wild cats, wolverines, and foxes, and he would gladly pay me for my work.

We went on talking and I told him that we should soon be going away from there. He said that he approved of our plans, and that he was going with us, but we stayed on rather late, almost until the beginning of May, for in April we had very good luck. It was, however, really time to get away for the animals' coats began to shed. By the time we had got everything ready for the journey, and cleared the traps away, we almost missed the right time for travelling. In haste we let Kid know, and in a few days we started.

We dismantled the cabins, loaded all our property, and our bag, on to the sledges and moved first to the river to get to the fox farms. There the fox farms belong chiefly to Indian fishermen living in the forests. They feed them with boiled fish: they must, of course, occasionally give them better food so that the animals grow better fur. The foxes which we brought were

crossed as soon as they were old enough with tame ones, which are kept in a bit of fenced woodland. The animals are given plenty of freedom, because some foxes, the blue fox for instance, will never breed in captivity.

Now I will explain about these farms: Foxes are crossed in various ways. The cross, for instance, between a grey fox and a black one has a very valuable fur. Such a pelt is dark grey, and fetches high prices if it is perfect. A white silver fox crosses well with a grey, blue, or red fox, but it is an interesting fact that the so-called black silver foxes never cross well with white silver vixens. On the other hand a white fox crosses with a black, and also with a grey vixen, and beautiful shades are thus obtained.

In the North one hears real fairy tales about the crossing of different animals. One may meet perhaps an Indian from the Mackenzie who boasts that he has succeeded in crossing a wolf dog with a small black bear, and obtained something for hauling wood in the forest. These dogs are slow, he says, but strong as horses. Naturally, when people have, at times, nothing better to do they try to get different animals together. I saw various experiments. They crossed a beaver with a dog, a dog with a bear, and devil knows what else; and sometimes it took them hours to get the animals together; sometimes they even had special boxes in which they fastened the female so that she could not run away. But of course nothing ever came of it. But, as I say, there are always rumours of how this and that man has got a new marvellous animal,

through crossing, and has sent it to a zoological garden, which paid him so much that he is now a rich man. Such drivel never fails to attract attention, it is true; after all, it is difficult to find amusements where there are so few interests, and crossing animals is one of them.

After having left on the farms the live animals which we had transported in wooden cages we set out on our journey to Herschel Island. One ought to leave those regions while there is still ice on the Mackenzie; but sometimes the season is so good, and valuable animals can be caught right into May, that it would be a sin to go earlier. Because of that we often prolonged our stay in the forest until the ice had gone from the river, and it had begun to flood so badly that we had to go back over the tundra, or wait until the first steamer came up. Sometimes as we were going over the ice down the Mackenzie a big thaw set in before we reached the delta, and in places we had to go over ankle deep in icy water. But we were never afraid, we knew that the ice was strong, and that it would last. Of course, for older hunters, who had rheumatism, this kind of travelling was not very pleasant.

This year Kid led us from our hunting grounds, and I must say that he led us through regions and by routes of which we had never dreamed before. We saw that he knew the country a thousand times better than we did because everywhere he went with absolute certainty. When we left Bears' Wilderness, and got into the forests, we kept our eyes open for frozen

animals, and we found quite a lot. Again we delayed several days, but at last we reached the Mackenzie.

Here, however, to our surprise Kid suddenly announced that he was not going any farther. He would wait on the bank until the boat arrived, and then he would sell his furs and go back again to his old hunting grounds.

"Come with us; you will have a good time with us. We are going to the New Siberian Islands, and from there to the Franz Josef Land, where we shall catch fish. . . ." In this way I tried to persuade him to go with us, because we had all got very fond of him, and expected that he would not want to leave us.

But Kid remained firm; he said that he liked that part of the world much better, that it suited him better now he was an old man. This, of course, was only an excuse, for we knew that in a short time he would go alone himself to the very places where we were trying to take him.

So we had to part with him. We set out, and he stayed there. We moved down to Herschel Island, and there we waited for the ice to break up. Devil take it! It was a disagreeable journey. When we went down the Mackenzie there was already water on the ice, in parts knee deep. The ice was strong underneath, there was no fear of it breaking, but the going was extremely trying, and that often reminded us of Kid. He knew the weather well, he knew that we should soon have to go through icy slush, and at his age that was too much for him.

On Herschel Island we had not to wait long. The

sea soon opened up, and we sailed out. Then we went in excellent spirits because we had such a fine bag: I alone had furs worth twenty-five thousand dollars.

Since then I have never heard of Kid. Although I met many Arctic wanderers and asked them about him they could not tell me anything. So we never knew whether he was still alive or dead; but when I remember how he danced like a youngster while the Eskimos played I feel certain that he must be still alive in the world.

NOME, THE GOLDEN TOWN ABOVE THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

I had got together a nice bit of capital from that hunt, but then my worries began, how to make it bigger.

I knew that when hunters had not caught much they sold their furs straight away on Herschel Island to the trading boats, of which there were many at anchor. But these did not pay as much for the furs as the people in Nome. For small quantities the difference was perhaps not so noticeable, but this year we had lots of furs, so we got on a boat and went as far as the most important centre of northern business. I already knew the little town of Nome well; I was quite at home there. Our boat anchored about four miles off the shore, because this town has no harbour. The Eskimos loaded our furs on barges and took them to the warehouses belonging to the firms with which we were to do business. They also took the goods which we had got in exchange for furs on the steamer.

In the meantime we went from one saloon to another, looked for acquaintances, asked where gold had been found and how much.

The little town was always full to the brim with gold-diggers and hunters. There were big shops, warehouses, branches of various American banks, night clubs, prostitutes. Well, there was gold about, wealth, often acquired by someone with little effort, and just as easily lost.

We learned where food was scarce, where it was expensive, where again there was a gold rush, and many other things, which, of course, were of considerable interest to us. They were still talking very much of a Swede called Johanson, and of his companion. I heard the whole story, and I purposely went to the sea to look at the old cemetery to see with my own eyes what had happened.

There was a cemetery on a small hill right near the sea, and when it was full, and could be used no longer, a new one was laid out. These two Swedes, Johanson and his companion, began to dig on the shore below the cemetery. They struck a vein, so they went on digging along it, and they kept finding more and more gold. They ran tunnels in all directions into the cliff, which was about ten feet high, and on the top of which there was the cemetery. They kept on digging steadily, and what they left the sea washed away at every tide.

These two were then once working underground when suddenly coffins began to fall on them from above. The men thought they would go mad, for, as Johanson said, the first coffin to fall contained an

enormously heavy Irishman; it opened, and the bearded figure stared at them with lifeless eyes.

The news that coffins and corpses were falling down on them spread through the town, and the Swedes had to stop working at the very moment when they were making the best finds, but after some time they began again. It is, of course, hardly a pleasant experience to have dead men raining on one's head—but gold is gold! This time they did not dig so near the surface. In this way they got out gold worth a hundred thousand dollars.

I must say that that mining under the cemetery made a great stir in the town, but the people were accustomed to such things, for there anything might turn up without warning.

Then great excitement broke out all over the country when news spread that not far from Nome there were large quantities of antimony in the mountains. I went to have a look myself, and I observed the peculiar formation of the rock; almost every few feet the strata were different. It was very nice, but on the whole nothing much was found there.

Then I set off from Nome to see another strange thing. Prospectors had hit upon a seam where the rock shone in the darkness with different colours like a rainbow. I was never able to understand how it was possible for a stone to be luminous: I touched it, but it was quite cold.

The gold-diggers made a careful search, but when they found no valuable minerals they made a big noise, and advertised it as a shining tunnel, and those who

could manage went to see it. It is about eight miles away from Nome, near a mountain called Sunside. The tunnel was twelve miles long; people were astonished at such a remarkable thing, and many even paid fifty dollars to be able to see it. But everyone had to pay at least a dollar, because at that time a dollar there was only worth a halfpenny. In this way the prospectors earned as much on it as if they had struck gold. One of the proprietors was a Czech, but I cannot remember his name any more.

After we had recompensed ourselves in Nome for all the hardships we had suffered on the Mackenzie we loaded our boat full of goods strictly according to the lists which we had made out, and then we weighed anchor again and sailed for the islands in Bering Sea, where we called and offered to the Eskimos what we had bought in Nome. We went everywhere and sold anything we could, and in return we got more furs, so that naturally after the whole journey round the islands we had twice as much as we began with in Nome. But that is how the profits are made.

But now I was anxious to be at home again as soon as possible. I had heaps to do yet. I had to catch and buy fish for the dogs, and chop lichen on the tundra, so as to have fuel for the winter; and besides that, with my team of Eskimos, I had to deliver provisions to my customers, and only after I had done all that should I be able to figure out how much that year had brought me in.

I was very well satisfied: very well I say.

I went to Captain Yankee, and paid him in furs and

goods the share of the money which he had put into our enterprise. I paid a smaller instalment to Oerrel. Emerson, a very good friend, was willing to wait; and my good comrade, but my greatest creditor, remained—MacDonald. I owed him an enormous sum; two hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

I went to him with loads of furs.

"Here, mate, I am bringing you an instalment for the boat!"

"Well, well, are you in such a hurry?"

"I have paid Captain Yankee almost the whole of his share, Oerrel also has a nice instalment. I never like to owe a person anything."

"But, man, your credit is good. I don't want your money, the boat is on the spot; what about it? Look after yourself a bit more, keep the money to put into your business."

But my Eskimos were already unloading the bales of furs in MacDonald's cave.

He objected, but I pressed them on him; we made up our accounts, and very well satisfied I moved again into my hole. I was glad that that year I could pay back so much, and that *Laura* was mine a good deal more.

III

TRADING IN THE POLAR WILDERNESS

I GO TRADING

The next year, early in the autumn, when we were hardly at home again after the expedition to the North, I set out with Emerson and twenty Eskimos for Canada. But this time I wanted to do business in those regions which on my previous journey I had got to know thoroughly; Emerson returned with the boat from Herschel Island to Nome to buy stores, while I in the meantime took my Eskimos and moved south into the interior of the continent. We had a small quantity of provisions, but soon sold the whole lot, and I hardly need mention them.

But while on Herschel Island I heard that further south, on the Mackenzie, the boat belonging to the Commercial Company of Alaska was lying at anchor. It had a big cargo and could not get rid of it. It was then useless to buy from the warehouses on Herschel Island when the boat had already taken provisions quite a long way south into the interior. So we started on our way to the boat. We again had to go for several days over the dreadful tundra, but we reached the boat in safety, and there we found that the people did not know what to do with their goods. I entered into conversation with them, and they took me to the director of the Company, a German Jew. I did not tell

him outright that I had come to see him; I just had a talk with him, gossiped, and asked him whether he intended to stay there over the winter, or whether he was going to take the goods back to Herschel Island.

At that he said:

"I don't want to, after we have got the stuff as far as here."

"Well, it's your business," I shrugged my shoulders, "but as far as I can see you will have to take it back. Unless you have men enough to hawk it round!"

"I have men to go round the gold-diggers' camps!"

"That's not bad! But you should also get rid of something to the trappers!"

"Hum, but I have no men to spare!"

I did not want to make the suggestion, but as the director would not himself, I had to, and I began:

"If you gave me some good stuff I might take something round the trappers!"

He at once jumped at this, and so it did not take long before we had settled that I should have 30 per cent. of the provisions I sold, and sell at what prices I thought best, but I was not to sell anything to the gold-diggers so as not to compete with his own people. I asked him how much he would trust me with till the next summer. The director looked at my long beard, and at my dog team; he saw that he could let me have credit, and so he said:

"Would fifty thousand dollars' worth be enough for you?"

That was enough even for prices in the North. I was satisfied, and at once I arranged with my Eskimos about loading the sledges. We took a good supply of beans, pepper, coffee, sugar, and bacon; I signed a declaration for the director that before July I should pay for everything, and straight away we set off for the hunters in the forests and for the Indian reservations. The hunters paid mostly in furs, which they handed over in exchange, and the Indians did the same. I am not ashamed to admit that I did well at this business, especially among the Indians, because in those regions one seldom draws a distinction between ten and a hundred dollars. And so I sometimes got for food worth ten dollars furs worth a good hundred. I also managed to buy on very good terms a few dogs, which were very valuable.

I kept moving westwards through the forests, making for the Porcupine River. Of course, you must not think that our expedition started on the spurs of the Rockies and went forwards day by day to finish its big journey as soon as possible. We did not want to travel so fast, nor could we with our big teams of dogs, whose stomachs had to be provided for just like ours. Whenever we came to a likely place we stayed there several days, or a week, or two; we hunted, and then wandered on, while all the time we slept in tents. In summer, on such journeys, hunters make holes in the ground instead of building cabins; then only a small slanting roof sticks out of the earth for the water to run off into a trench, so as not to flood the hole.

AN ACCIDENT WITH A LYNX TRAP

In the regions through which we were just moving, and on the way from Dawson towards the Mackenzie, there are more lynxes than in all the rest of the world. These animals weigh about seventy pounds; they attack men, as I said before, always from a tree, they never dare do it on the ground. They have frightfully wild eyes, and on their ears they have little curly hairs like a Polish Jew. They are a foot and a half high, and over three feet long. Some hunters believe that they drink men's blood, but that must be twaddle. I never saw anything like that.

Well, then, we were mainly hunting for lynxes there and I had traps set in several places. One morning I went round and found a lynx caught in a trap. Usually when I found a lynx caught like this I snatched it by the tail, pulled it towards me as far as the chain would allow which held the trap fast to the stake, and then I hit it with a small hatchet on the head, whether it showed any signs of life or not. This lynx, however, lay as if completely dead, so I bent down over it and tried to pull it out of the trap. At that moment it sprang up, and although it had one leg in the trap it slashed me with the other paw with such force that it tore the clothes on my chest to shreds. Then it sprang a second time with all its force, and my trousers were in tatters. That shows what kind of claws a lynx has. Bloodstained and all in rags, like a scare-crow, I managed to crawl to the Eskimo reservation, where the men were able to dress me again, and so I was

lucky enough to get back to my party. I could then look after myself easily.

But I did rather well for all that. Not far from there, when we had gone about half a day into the forest, we overtook an expedition where the men were bending over a sledge on which some unlucky fellow was dying.

His head was in shreds, lacerated beyond recognition; the flesh hung on his face like a heap of red rags; he was scalped; on one place even the skull was broken through so that his brains were visible. In spite of that the man gasped and moaned terribly for half an hour before he passed away. I asked what had done it. A lynx.

THROUGH THE FORESTS OF ALASKA

The forests of Alaska through which we moved, after we had left the Porcupine River to our left, are mostly composed of spruces and firs, which are about the size of ours, or perhaps rather smaller. But they are sometimes so close together that one cannot get through. It is strange that there and in Northern Canada as well the trees are as if lifted from the ground, so that one can see right through the roots to the other side, and the tree is, so to speak, set up a bit in the air. It is like this as a rule on the edge of the forest, while in the middle of the wood the trees sit firmly. The hunters had explained to me already that it was the frozen earth which pushed the roots out, and in the same way they explained that the trees sit low and firmly in the middle of the forest because there the Polar storms

cannot reach them in their full strength, and because of that it is warmer. Whether this is true or not I don't know.

The soil in the forest is covered with a mass of branches, fallen trunks, and cones. There are acorns lying about where, of course, oak trees grow among the firs, or trees which I always took for oaks. I saw most oaks on my way to the Yukon between White Horse and Dawson. In some places I saw many trees which are called tamaraks, and their red wood is sent to the States for the aeroplane factories; so they say. In the clearings in the forests there are enormous quantities of blackberries, raspberries and bilberries; it is just the same in Canada. These are mostly eaten by bears. Then there is a small shrub called Belladonna, and another which we call the Swedish crown. It has red berries. There are also bushes near the rivers, and thousands and thousands of rabbits and hares live in them. They are white, or grey; a bit bigger than our rabbits; they weigh up to eight pounds. Their fur is thrown away; only the Indians use it; they sew it together to make covers for beds. The meat is nothing particular, and is eaten only when better food is unobtainable.

In places we had to hack our way laboriously through the forests if we did not hit the direction of the cut trails. In those days there were very few of these cut trails in the North; some of them were just being made. They usually led to the larger Indian reservations, but I mostly travelled over clearings in the forest. When we had to go round to avoid the

forest we sometimes wasted a dreadful amount of time because we had to make colossal detours: often for days on end we had to go round a piece of forest through which a man could go in a few hours. But we had sledges and dogs, and to drive these straight into the forests would have been quite senseless.

A GOLD-DIGGER TRAPPER, A TRAPPER GOLD-DIGGER

The Rockies between the Rivers Koyukuk, Yukon and Porcupine are known to any trapper and gold-digger in Alaska. These two occupations often merge into one another: a trapper is sometimes gold-digger, a gold-digger sometimes a trapper. In Alaska, just as near the River Mackenzie, once in a number of years some kinds of animals die out completely, so that at times hunters have been unable to catch a single hare during the whole winter; in other years there were so many animals that they only had to hit around with a stick or an iron pipe, and they killed hares in plenty, which literally ran in and out between their legs. At another time, again, they found an enormous number of animals all lying dead. Some contagion must have infected them, otherwise I can't explain how it happened. Besides hares the same thing happens with wolverines, skunk, beavers, weasels, and chocholins. Sometimes they die out to such an extent that it is quite useless to look for them; then again hunters have golden days when baked pigeons just fly into their mouths. Experienced trappers who have been in

Alaska for decades know quite well when and what sort of animal is dying out, and when it will appear again; and they know the length of this cycle with different species. Of course sometimes a calamity like this comes quite unexpectedly, and then even the most sagacious hunters have to go home empty-handed. When this happens a trapper usually turns into a gold-digger; throws the rifle away, and takes up a pickaxe; instead of gunpowder he works with dynamite; instead of animals he shoots into the rock; sometimes the gold-fever gets hold of him to such an extent that he never returns to the hunting business again, except for the times when he has to hunt to supply his own needs.

Sometimes the opposite happens, and after the desperate prospector has hacked away at the rocks, where he expected to find treasures, for several years, and all in vain, he throws the pickaxe and all his tools away into the stream, sells the bit of gold he may have got, buys guns, a tent, and provisions, and moves into the forests after game. Between the trappers and the gold-diggers there is usually a good understanding; while hunting the trappers pay a good deal of attention to earth formations, and the composition of the soil, and if they find a locality where to the best of their knowledge there may be gold they let the nearest settlement of gold-diggers know. Hunters usually dig through the summer, and if they find anything they sell it at the beginning of winter to the banks, and then again they go up the river, and try their luck at hunting, or they stick to their new occupation. There

are many people in the world, and they have many different experiences. Sometimes I did not know whether I was talking to a prospector or a gold-digger; even he himself hardly knew what he was.

Where we were the way into the Rockies from any side was very dangerous, and some hunters stayed there for as long as three years at a time, and only then returned, with an enormous stock of furs, to the Yukon and to the banks. I remember that one hunter got half a million dollars for his furs, in provisions and in ready cash. Of course amazing luck like this is rare; there are few hunters who are big millionaires, because for the furs the banks pay in foodstuffs, the prices of which were very indefinite, but always so high that some of the trappers are glad if in return for their furs they get provisions, ammunition and clothes enough to last them through the following year. After all these hunters don't want much; they live mainly on soup and meat, and they are almost always rough, frightfully neglected people with bestial habits. That is part of their business, the part due to loneliness in places where a man has to fight from morning till night.

I got to know them one after the other during my first expedition, and now again on my big and strenuous business journey. Their needs were really so small that I found it tedious. I sold very little of my goods to them, and so I decided, since I had dragged them with me as far as that, I would go round the gold-diggers on the Kobuk.

After all there is very little difference between a gold-digger and a hunter. I knew besides that in that

region where to transport even small things is extremely difficult I should be decently paid for my trouble. And finally I said to myself; the world is large, they would hardly find out in a hurry on the Mackenzie to whom I was selling goods on the Kobuk, for these rivers are miles and miles apart. So we went further; the dreadful swamps were already frozen, and no danger threatened to us.

I SERVE AS A HANDKERCHIEF TO A MOOSE

But then something happened to me all of a sudden that I shall never forget as long as I live. We were going through a long valley; the way there was a bit more passable, and so I was enjoying it by myself. As I was walking behind the sledge, suddenly, without any warning, from a deep snowdrift at the side a moose bull charged straight at me; he snorted, and with the loathsome and copious contents of his nose, he hit me straight in the face and on the shoulder. I got terribly frightened, for the animal which had so unexpectedly rushed at me was as big as a horse.

But the bull ran away. I could not get rid of the horrid stuff, and even four days afterwards I was still scraping with a razor trying to clean the relics of the adventure from my fur coat. The hunters say that if slime like this from a moose gets into the eyes it blinds a man. The bull can snort ten yards, they say. But I never heard that anybody ever lost his sight in this way; it must be one of the many superstitions that hunters have. Most hunters and gold-diggers, and

many of the men in the Arctic, cannot read or write, sometimes they are extremely childish and superstitious, and one must listen to their statements and advice with an open mind.

A moose may be dangerous for a man, so, at least, the Indians told me. They often had a close shave trying to save their skins when attacked by this animal either in fear or rage. They said they had to jump behind a tree at the right moment, the bull then hit the tree with its head and was stunned for a time, while they could either get away, or pull out a revolver and shoot the beast in the head at close quarters.

THE DEAD IRISHMAN

But this was not my only adventure on that journey. As we were moving on over the wild tundra one of our reserve dogs going along at the side of the sledge stopped short and sniffed, then ran on and began to scratch in the snow. We set off after it, and found a dead man—a giant in stature, lying stiff. Not far away his sledge lay buried under the snow, turned over in a hollow in the tundra. We searched in the dead man's pockets and made out that he was called O'Brien, an Irishman. My God, what a job it was to get into his pockets! He must have been lying there right through the summer, got covered with water, and so was frozen into it. Everything about him was as solid as a rock. He was wounded in the groin, and I think he must have slipped as he was jumping from one hillock to another on the tundra, became exhausted because of

his wound, and when finally his sledge fell into the hole he had no longer any strength left to lift it out, so he lay down and dumbly waited for his end to come. That was nothing new for us. Often on our journeys we found a head or a leg sticking out of the snow, and so we only pulled out the papers from the dead man's pockets and left them at the nearest station; otherwise we did not loiter round such a sad spot. When later on we gave an account of O'Brien's end the hunters told us that they knew him; they had warned him the year before, they said, that he ought not to go over the tundra alone, but he would not listen to them.

ENDICOTT-RAYON

We moved on through dismal country in the direction of the Koyukuk. We knew that we could not lose our way because at some place or other we were bound to strike the river. Besides that, my Eskimos knew that part of the country quite well. We were in the district called Endicott-rayon where there were many hunting grounds. I said that the Eskimos knew their bearings well in that region, but that must not be taken literally. There was really only one hunter in the whole world who knew Endicott-rayon well. He was an inconspicuous man to look at, but a man of whom the whole North talked as a perfect model of unselfishness.

That man was called Indian-Kid. He was a solitary hunter who rambled in the mountains and forests there and carefully observed the mineral wealth in the ground, made note of the richer spots, and returned

year after year to the gold-diggers, taking back with him all those who had come to grief over their golden dreams. Many people who had already begun to think of the revolver got a new zest for life when Indian-Kid appeared among them, and many of them often came back rich men.

One of them has just come into my mind: a man whom I learned to know there, and who also owed his good luck to Indian-Kid. They called him Gold King. He was a kind of renegade gold-digger; sometimes he hunted, at others he looked for gold. This man was already in a bad way, and suddenly he had more luck than good sense: he began to follow Indian-Kid's instructions, and always found something. He dug only on the surface, and yet in one summer he found in a place that Kid had told him of gold worth a hundred thousand dollars. When he came with it to the bank in Fort Yukon, and people heard about it, they were all seized with a terrible frenzy, and they all rushed to the Rockies, for King's gold was of fine quality; he got twenty-four dollars an ounce for it. The gold-diggers called that part Rocky Mountain Prairies: at once it began to be livelier there. I don't know if this was the right name; some rivers, mountains, even whole rayons had many names; the Indians called them one thing, the Eskimos another, or we did, while there were different names marked on the map, they say.

These mountains are a dreadful waste, rock upon rock, stone upon stone; a rocky, barren surface changes into forest, and the forest changes into swamp. Sometimes hunters get right into the interior of this region

very easily; they have good luck while hunting, or they strike a gold-bearing rock; but when they set off back they find out that in the meantime floods from one of the innumerable rivers and streams have swamped the whole country through which they came to such an extent that it is difficult to get away without risking their lives.

Our journey to the River Koyukuk was also a perfect succession of dangers. Here in summer expeditions sink in the swampy ground, over which mosquitoes swarm in immense black clouds. Later on I experienced this myself, and I am not exaggerating when I say that sometimes on a sunny day the dense black mass of these pests flying over us was like a heavy cloud. In summer one must always travel through this region with a double veil over the head.

Later I also saw how animals protect themselves against this plague. There are very many moose there. As soon as one of these animals comes to a swampy place it goes straight into the slough, sinks in up to its knees, rolls over on one side, then on the other, and so wallows about until it is covered with a layer of mud, which dries in sunshine and forms a hard coat of mail. Then the moose at any rate has a little bit of protection. Of course, when we saw clouds of mosquitoes flying round the animal's eyes, and hanging there in whole swarms, we were really sorry for the beast, for in this case they are quite helpless. Foxes, caribou, mountain sheep, and goats roll in the mud in just the same way as moose.

But we in the autumn only talked about this plague

to cheer ourselves up, because with us it was not as bad as that, and sometimes men have to endure much worse hardships.

We even settled in that region, and after a successful hunt we went further over the frozen swamps, through the forest, and over the tundra till we struck the River Koyukuk.

Then we met a few people here and there and frequently we came across a gold-diggers' settlement. So I began conversations, and asked questions, because I was mainly interested to hear how digging had started there. During the time when we were guests of the gold-diggers, when some played cards, and others drank in the cabins, and told stories, since I never played cards, I got to know all the stories and the history of those parts. But I was particularly inquisitive about the gold-fever on the Koyukuk.

The gold-diggers, who had stopped working because it was already autumn, gave me an account of it.

THE GOLD-FEVER ON THE KOYUKUK

Very few of those who went to Dawson had any luck. Too many hurried there because it lies in Canadian territory, and the laws there did not impose limits in any way on mining, as was the case, for instance, in Alaska, where only citizens of the United States were allowed to dig. There anyone could dig who paid seven dollars, the mining fee, and a certain percentage of what he found. At the beginning this was thirteen, but later only three per cent. Of course the ground was

quickly taken up, but in spite of that new prospectors kept on arriving. Dawson attracted everything; you could see that best in winter on the frozen Yukon, where the stream of contractors and new arrivals never ceased; but they discovered the barrenness of that promised land, and moved further on. They founded the settlements called Forty Miles and Sixty Miles; but this constant trek was the origin of other places as well, and one of these people was the real cause of the great harships on the Koyukuk.

The man who started a great upheaval in the whole of Alaska, and through whose doing the Dawson fever was taken into a new region altogether, was the gold-digger Nolan. When first in Dawson he did not fare very well, and so he set out with his sister for the Koyukuk. There had been many prospectors before him, but no one struck anything there, or if he did what he found didn't amount to much. Nolan went to the Koyukuk, and he began by digging a hole down for forty feet. His sister helped him by pulling the rock which he dug out up on a rope; she worked like a navvy. He struck gold! It was not much, only a fair return for the two of them; and he could not afford to pay a man to help. He took out the gold, and from the vertical shaft he ran tunnels in all directions. As he did this he noticed that his tunnel inclined upwards for a time, and then sloped down again. Whenever he came to the lowest part of this folded layer he always found fine gold, but in the higher spots there was less.

He went on working like this for some time, but one day he told his sister that he would finish his work,

now that he had the money he needed, and they would go to the Yukon, or to Dawson, and buy dynamite, nitro-glycerine, and Hercules powder. Then they would start the work on a large scale. He wanted to blast away the rock which formed the bottom of his tunnel because he thought that the real treasure was underneath.

There was a good deal of risk in this enterprise. It was quite likely that the rock which Nolan had struck was really the bottom of the gold seam, the bedrock. He would then be on the dry. But to get at least some support for his idea that the bottom layer was not the true bedrock he went to the gold-diggers, to whom he had sold part of the pegged claim, and got them to measure with him the depth of the layer. He found it was sometimes more, sometimes less; he made a sketch, and that gave him confidence in his notion.

He made a raft and went with his sister down the Koyukuk to the Yukon and then to Dawson. That's a journey for you! There he bought large supplies of food, lots of dynamite, and powder. The steamer took everything as far as the spot where the Koyukuk joins the Yukon; there Nolan loaded the goods on his raft, and hauled it up stream. At the beginning it was an easy job because the river is wide, and quiet; but later, when they came to the mountains, they met with serious difficulties. They both, the girl and her brother, worked terribly hard, and tried to get as far as possible before winter set in. After a great struggle they got fifty miles against the stream to a brook, which to this day is called Nolan creek, which

is four hundred and twenty miles from the Yukon.

The raft was then pulled up on the bank, and while the sister kept guard Nolan went to Alatna, where he hired Indians to carry his goods on sledges as far as Alatna. But there was still a big part of his journey left. Nolan made use of every opportunity; where there were big whirlpools on the river, and a strong current, so that it did not freeze, he hauled his goods by water, and when at last he was near his destination he tried to get dogs. But in the place which was then called Betel on the Koyukuk, and which is the nearest place on the river from Nolan creek, there was not a living soul. All the gold-diggers had dispersed to get provisions for themselves. But in the end he managed to find a few people on the gold-fields who had dogs; with these Nolan hauled the supplies to his cabin.

As soon as he had finished with this horrid job he went back again to Dawson. There he found a captain who owned a small boat, and with him he made a contract for the goods to be carried on the Yukon and Koyukuk as far as Betel. At the same time Nolan hired two Swedes in Dawson, Nelson and Patterson, both highly skilled in the job which was in store for Nolan at the moment. He took them on the boat and they all went together with the cargo. To get the goods along from Betel to Nolan creek, a distance of seven miles, was not nearly so difficult this time because Nolan took dogs with him from Dawson.

When at last everything was on the spot, and Nolan saw that he had provisions for two years, he began to work. He himself, of course, had not to move a finger:

Nelson and Patterson did the work. They blasted away the ryem, that is the rock which was preventing them from getting deeper. It was twenty-two feet thick, but in the end they broke through it, and began to bring up sand which gave indications of gold. Actually they first hit upon a sandy mud which is called quicksand. They dug through it and struck a bed of ordinary sand which they simply called the gravel, then a black sand which is called the chicken-foot gravel, and then the shutter which shone with various colours. Nolan was now waiting impatiently. It must come next! Three days later the two workers reached the real bedrock on which there was a lot of sand lying, which is called the violet gravel. There was five feet of it: when they brought up the first pan of this stuff there was a nugget in it worth a hundred and eighty-three dollars. But Nolan did not waste his time jumping about in hysterics; at once he let down a barrel of water, and while his two Swedes and a third man, whom he took on, were digging side tunnels, he washed out the gold because he needed it badly to pay his men. He told me later that he had washed out in a day as much gold as the workers cost him in six weeks. But, of course, he had to keep washing steadily for many days before he had enough gold to be able to square up with them properly, for they had a hundred and fifty dollars a day, and full board.

When he saw that he had got together sufficient gold he closed the mine. He could not carry on like that any longer, he needed machines, and boilers to make a decent profit out of it.

The news of Nolan's good luck spread like wild-fire, and first into Nolan creek itself. All the gold-diggers who were working on the false bedrock at once began to break through it, but there was no powder or dynamite available. They promised the two Swedes the blue in the sky if they would do it for them as well, but they could hardly dream of doing that with their bare hands.

From Nolan creek news of the gold flew to the Yukon, and from there up stream and down stream: soon in the whole of Alaska people were talking of nothing else but Nolan and the colossal riches on the Koyukuk. Those who had nothing on hand, or who thought better luck was waiting for them on the Koyukuk, left what they had and hastened there. People dashed there as thoughtlessly as they did to Dawson in 1897.

But the fields along Nolan's creek were already taken, and everything was in firm hands. This was the first disappointment for the prospectors. Other disappointments came later. The gold-diggers spread out over the district and started to dig wherever they thought they might find something. So they began to work at McDonald creek, Orange creek, Villas creek, and so on. But there were by then so many people that the slow private business of getting supplies was not nearly sufficient; there were no traders in the district, and the people could only eat what individuals had taken on sledges. That was, of course, so little that it ran out, and the people often could get nothing at all, even if they were willing to pay whole ransoms for it.

Coffee, tea and sugar were the chief things lacking.

After some time the hunters moved there who had been shooting in the forest, and they brought meat to the Koyukuk. A pound fetched the unbelievable sum of fifty to seventy dollars. Fisherman followed with salmon and asked a hundred dollars apiece. They got it, for the gold-diggers were finding gold everywhere, but they only found sufficient to pay for this expensive living. They had not enough to hire a labourer. If at times they needed a worker for some job or other it was a bigger trouble with the man than with the gold in which he had to be paid. First of all, he never began on the job straight away; instead he went into the forest to provide himself with meat. It took a good long while before he shot enough game to support himself for a few weeks, but it took still longer before he got salt, pepper, and other things. Only after that did he turn up, and, according to the custom in practice on the Koyukuk, he had to be paid every day, not as in Dawson by the week, or even once a month. The defects in this arrangement soon became obvious. A man did not work long: he stayed in a gold-mine a week, or eight days, and then left the job. He had money enough for salt and pepper, the rest he got through hunting, as much as he needed for himself. In the meantime he did another job, which, it is true, did not bring in much at once, but by which he could earn something. Everyone saw that boilers would be brought to the Koyukuk just as they had been taken to Dawson and everywhere else. Every man in Alaska, and in Canada, if he was not a bit wrong in his head, knew that boilers

needed very much fuel, and that usually it was scarce just when it was needed most. So these workers preferred to cut wood in the forest. Later they sold a cord (a pile about three feet high) for thirty-five dollars, or with carriage for seventy dollars. Fuel for one boiler cost as much as two thousand dollars a day; that shows very well how expensive it was to mine.

In the meantime Nolan looked after the boilers. A boat brought them up for him; this time it was a trading boat of the North American Transportation and Trading Company. This company was the first to do business in that region, and then others followed, including the N.C. Soon afterwards there was a regular transport service, and the famine was at an end.

Nolan hired nine men when he began work on his mine, and after he had opened up the ground he hired over thirty, who worked day and night in two shifts. One shift had to get the ground ready for the other which did the digging. This was done by means of hollow metal stakes whose pointed ends were driven into the ground. At the end of the point there was a hole; steam was blown into the stake, which thawed the frozen earth. The second shift dug tunnels where the ground had been thawed, and carried away in wheelbarrows the gold-bearing sand to the hoist. At the top the excavated sand was thrown in a heap, and in summer it was washed.

Nolan worked for three and a half years. In winter they worked below the ground, in spring they washed out the gold, in summer they had to take the gold to the banks, and buy materials, and as winter returned

work below started afresh. On an average Nolan got up in a year gold worth two and a half million, but in the last year that he mined in that place he only got one and a half million. He told me that sometimes in his mine there were lumps of gold as big as one's fists.

This man did well then, and he is one of the few gold-diggers who really were successful. He had great luck. For think only of his neighbours! They dug in the same valley, under the same conditions, on the spots which Nolan himself had pegged and sold to them. And what did they find under the false bedrock? Plenty of gold, but only enough to pay for the labour.

I walked among the gold-diggers, and I was keenly interested in what there was to see. I sold foodstuffs to them, I talked with them to learn about many strange things, and to get an insight into their work. For instance, I made acquaintance with two Australians who were digging in one spot and finding gold which had a whitish silvery crust. They called this gold concentrated, and compared with the rest it fetched a high price. The bank gave nineteen and a half for an ounce. But such gold had to be washed out with acid. They used a kind of green liquid which they called nitric acid. When they poured it over the gold the white crust disappeared at once, and a very yellow metal remained, like the most beautiful polished brass. Other gold-diggers found gold in tiny grains, they were like groats in the black sand, which beside gold also contained very much iron. This was easily removed

with a magnet. The gold itself was cleaned with quicksilver—mercury; but the sand had to be thoroughly cleaned and sifted before the mercury was poured on to it. This ate away all the gold; then sand and dirt were removed from its surface, and when the mercury with the gold in it had been cleaned it was poured into a gold pan over the fire. As the pan got warm the mercury began to change to a white smoke and go off, and pure gold was left in the pan. But in this way too much mercury was used up, so the gold-diggers caught it back again. Over the pan there was a cover like an umbrella, from this a pipe went into a pail of cold water. The mercury vapour ran into the pail, and there in the cold water it condensed and changed back again to mercury. I watched it working, and I said to myself: Well, what a contraption!

Gold-diggers really need not do this at all, because every bank has a better arrangement still for cleaning gold. But the bank charges three and a half dollars an ounce for cleaning it, and therefore every gold-digger prefers to do it himself. I did not miss having a look inside the bank to see how they did the job there. They had some sort of green liquid, but this ate away all the dirt as well.

They did not do it there in gold pans, but in graphite crucibles. Afterwards they cast the gold, already purified, in lumps like bricks of twenty-five or fifty pounds; these were put into iron boxes, and packed like this the gold was sent by boat to the States.

AN IRISHMAN FROM KENTUCKY

On my rambles on the Koyukuk I met a gold-digger whose name I have forgotten, but he was an Irishman from Kentucky, who was working in spite of the winter which was already beginning. By that time I had had so much experience that I saw at once that he was hard up, that he was working to get something to pay for his food.

But still he invited me in, he even treated me. And when he had thus made acquaintance with me, he suddenly burst out: "Well, what about selling me some food?"

I did not like to but I had to ask: "Have you got any gold?"

He said he had not, but that a mate always helps a mate. At that I said: "But I am not supposed to sell to the gold-diggers!"

Then he leant forward and said: "Well, well, it won't go any further."

What could I do? I took from the sledge some meat which we had got by hunting; I unloaded also some beans, coffee, sugar, and bacon, and with a heavy heart I said good-bye, not so much to the gold-digger as to my goods.

"You are a good chap," he said as we parted, "when I strike gold I shall reward you handsomely."

I knew this kind of talk from the New Siberian Islands; I felt uneasy, but I started again on my journey, lighter by a nice handful of dollars.

I only comforted myself by thinking that perhaps

the Irishman might make some money and that he might pay me for what I had given him so unwillingly. We moved on up the Koyukuk, here and there we came across gold-diggers' settlements, or Indian reservations, but we soon crossed the Koyukuk and plunged again into almost impenetrable forests where we had to fight every inch of the way.

IN THE BEAR'S DEN

About half-way down the river Koyukuk, on a tributary called the Alatna, there is an Indian reservation of the same name. We stopped there, and sold foodstuffs among the native Indians. These were not exactly our best friends, especially not when they were drunk, but we knew how to deal with them, and the business went smoothly. From there we went over Wiseman and Heath on the Koyukuk through the forests to the Kobuk. I was travelling with my dogs at the rear, and the eight Eskimos were some hundred yards in front, when suddenly I saw in the snow traces of blood, I looked closer, and I saw that one of my dogs must have cut his paw on something and that he was colouring strongly. I halted the team, unharnessed the wounded animal, and put it on the sledge. In doing this I delayed myself so much that in the meantime my Eskimos got far ahead. At last I found myself in the middle of the forest, there there was a cross-road, one trail went to the left, another to the right, both had been recently used, and I did not know which my companions had taken. I knelt down and

looked to see which track was fresh, but it was already dusk, and so I was not much wiser. I stood for a time completely at a loss, I tried to get the dogs to follow the Eskimos, but they could not understand what I wanted them to do. Then I chanced it and started off on the trail to the right, trusting to luck that it would be the right one. I chased the dogs; they flew like devils; then I stopped, I called, I roared, there was nothing. I had to make up my mind to spend the night there, and the next day trust to my memory and make for the direction of the Kobuk, for that was where my party was going. Now the point was to find a suitable place for the night. It was already late in the evening as I moved through the forest along the slopes which ran in the direction of the river Kobuk. I did not want to move away from the river, and therefore I had to stick to these rocks. Suddenly I heard crackling; the soil was giving way; then I felt a sharp pain in my face, and I knew at once what was happening: I was falling through into a bear's den. With a bound I dashed up again and crawled out on my knees. Once before on the Mackenzie I had fallen into such a den, and then I had escaped; this time at any rate I had the advantage of knowing at once what was happening, and I did not lose my presence of mind.

But now I was on my knees in the snow, and I saw that my dogs had gone. They had dashed over the fatal spot, and they did not notice that their master had fallen through as they raced on. I bent over the hole and breathed deeply. I recognized by the smell that the hole was empty and that after all there was

not much danger. Of course, my position was not enviable, I began to feel a hot pain all over my body, for I had been badly cut and bruised on my face, chest, and feet, by the branches which covered the den.

My fur suit was torn and the frost got right through to my body, so I did not feel the pain so much; instead the blood cooled me pleasantly as it congealed. But after a time I became faint, shivering with cold, my teeth began to chatter, and I thought that my last hour had struck. I hobbled along the trail made by my dogs, I swore at them, but I knew that I simply had to go, otherwise I should die there. It is really marvellous where one's last strength comes from for a final effort when already one thinks it is quite impossible to make half a step more. I went, and went sometimes erect, sometimes on all fours, till I saw in the gathering darkness that I was at a crossroad, tracks ran in all directions, and I knew I was near some reservation, or retreat; to my great joy I saw my dogs a little farther on near the sledge which had upset; they must have looked round, not knowing where to go, and then found out that their master was missing, and stopped. I tried to hurry, I almost ran to them; I put on the sledge the wounded dog which was lying quietly in the snow, and drove on till in a few minutes I saw human habitations. It was a retreat—four huts. I caught a glimpse of some red and some white faces; I crawled off the sledge and staggered towards them, and in a few words I told them what had happened to me. They quickly took me indoors, carefully took off my torn furs, and washed away the

blood. I had deep wounds on the chest and neck, and on the left calf, while my face was scratched and bleeding. They put arnica and zinc salve on the wounds; they unharnessed my dogs and fed them; they carefully stored away the furs which I had on the sledge, and so they looked after me for three whole days.

The third day my three Eskimos turned up; they were overjoyed to find me. They told me that when they noticed that I had disappeared they thought that I was lost for ever in the forest; they waited for a time, and then three of them set out to look for me. They searched for a long time till at the cross-road they found that I had taken the wrong turning. Following the tracks they discovered the hole where I fell through, examined it, but saw that the den had two entrances, and that it was empty, so that I had not ended in the bear's embrace. They also read from the snow that I had scrambled out, and that I had hobbled on; everywhere in the snow there were bloodstains; so they found me. At once they set off to fetch the other five, and we all stayed there for two days more. In the end I was glad that at least I had had a nice rest. One of the inhabitants of the retreat gave me a parka, another a shirt, the third trousers, and I was completely equipped again. But from that time I took good care not to stay too far behind.

TRADE WITH A SWEDE

We moved through the forests, and after some days we got to the small rivers which flow into the Kobuk.

We came to the first gold-diggers' settlement where a tall chap caught sight of us.

"My gosh," I kept saying to myself, "I must have seen that chap somewhere before." I went to him; he raised his arms: "God Almighty! Arctic Bismarck! Whatever are you doing here?"

I looked at the blue eyes, and the golden hair of that gold-digger, and I remembered that I had seen him last year on the Mackenzie. He was a Swede; he was called Erickson—nothing to do with the bankrupt whaler Erickson—but of the same nationality. The other time when we first met Erickson told me that he had a gold-field on Dahl-creek in Little Berlin. There, however, he had had no luck; he searched round for a long time, and because, as he said, he found gold here he stayed.

"But we have a miserable shortage of food here!" he said at once: "Surely you must be bringing us something?"

"And how is it that it is so bad here?"

He waved his hand: "Bad! It wouldn't be bad here, but those thieves who bring us food don't know how much to ask for it."

"Well I can't give it away for nothing! You're half dead before you get here with dogs. It's a hard crust."

The Swede slapped my shoulder: "Hello: does anybody here want anything for nothing? Let everyone have a decent life. 'Live and let live:' that's my motto."

He invited me in, and made coffee: I was glad to drink it but began to get ready to move on.

"So to speak, I want some food," Erickson suddenly stammered out.

I expected this tale, but I had a good look at Erickson and he did not appear to have any money. Already I had made one bad bargain on the Koyukuk, now I only needed another gold-digger in a mess and soon all my profit would be gone. His statement that provisions were expensive there was good, but I could not afford to make him a present for it. I again began with the excuse that under my agreement I was not supposed to sell stuff to the gold-diggers, only among the hunters. He did not pay any heed to that, and so at the end I had to let him have some provisions. Bearing in mind what might happen I charged him pretty stiff for it. He did not take much, but we agreed that he should pay me eight thousand dollars in gold.

"That's all right, come as early as you can in spring, and I shall have the money ready for you."

"But can I trust you?"

He swore most faithfully. His pious promises quietened me a little, but not for long. I had hardly gone any farther when I asked how it was with Erickson, for I had just sold him some food: the other gold-diggers were sorry for me. Erickson, they said, was not a man who deserved credit. On the Dahl-creek, where he was before, he quarrelled with the gold-diggers so much that he had to clear off, otherwise they would have shot him. He got meat on credit all over the neighbourhood and to the present day he had not paid anything for it at all. And other such things they told me about him.

I moved on long the Kobuk, and sold for cash. Once we came to a gold-digger's settlement, and our arrival caused a real panic. The people flocked together, shouting one against the other: "Arctic Bismarck!" they pressed my hands, and told me how well off they were now. I knew nearly everybody. They were a handful of men left from those who had been enticed to Wrangel Island, where they lost everything they had, and after terrible hardships they got to here. We stayed with them for several days, I promised to visit them sometimes with food, and I went with the Eskimos into the forests to hunt. We did not hunt long in one place; we lived in tents, only during the worst weather we made shelters in the ground with a small roof.

As soon as the Polar storms had passed we rambled farther on over the country looking for animals frozen to death, and we found heaps of them. Then because spring was slowly returning we went back to the Kobuk, and first of all to find the man Erickson who owed me money.

As soon as I saw him I knew that it was a bad job. He greeted me with a long face, and said that he could not pay because he had only just began to mine, and it had cost him a lot.

"You'll have to wait," were his parting words.

So I went away, and walked in dejected spirits through the gold-diggers' settlement. What now? I was at a loss, I did not know what to do. If only someone would tell me how to tackle that man!

I happened to come across the cabin of an Irishman,

called MacIvor. I went in and began a conversation, then I told him my sad story. MacIvor scratched his head:

"From what I know of Erickson you will not get anything from him!"

I told him that this was poor comfort. I had hauled the stuff right from the Mackenzie, and at one sweep I was cheated of such a dreadful amount of money.

We talked about this for a long time, and then MacIvor told me that it would be best if I went to Erickson with a letter from the director of the company reminding me that he had entrusted me with the goods.

"But we've nothing like that!" I complained.

"That doesn't matter, we can write it ourselves!"

With that MacIvor sat down, and wrote a letter as if the director were writing it to me. It stated that I had to pay at once; if I did not, he would seize my dogs and bring me to ruin.

With this letter I went to Erickson:

"See here," I said to him, "what the director of the company which let me have my goods has written. I have a home in New Siberia, I must scratch miserably myself for a living, now I have to go back and no money anywhere!"

Erickson read the letter, handed it back to me, just shrugged his shoulders, and kept on saying:

"My dear Bismarck, you can throw me on the ground as often as you like, you won't shake any gold out of me, because I haven't got any. I can only give

you one piece of advice. Go back to New Siberia, and in the autumn come again; I shall not forget you!"

I did not give in so easily; I entreated, and begged, for the money was worth it; but in the end I had to go away empty-handed.

I went to MacIvor and told him about it. He only smiled, and when I had finished the whole story how it all was, he told me to go with him. It was after midday. We walked round the claim which belonged to Erickson. MacIvor kept on smiling, and at last he took me to the place where Erickson's long trench ended, in which a stream of water washed out the gold sand. The trench was three hundred feet long, at the end, beneath it, there was a heap of sand washed from the trough. Usually a gold-digger examines these heaps carefully every day to see if gold has not been washed away with the lighter sand. Ivor explained to me that often in his carelessness Erickson did not inspect his heap for four days at a time. So we threw ourselves on the heap, and rummaged in it. Gold glistened here and there; Ivor and I picked it out as fast as we could; when we had gone through it thoroughly we ran into Ivor's cabin, and there we weighed the gold. It was worth more than three thousand dollars. Some pieces were as big as knuckle joints.

Erickson owed me money for eight thousand dollars, I had now got three thousand already.

But in the meantime Erickson took pity on me, he started to wash out his gold, and when it amounted to eight thousand dollars he brought it to me. I could

not hold my tongue, and I had to let him know that I had had a look at a heap of sand under the trough, and had got something out of it.

Erickson tore his hair, and swore dreadfully. I told him that it represented interest for having had to wait. He was taken back a bit, then he took my hand and laughed:

"Well, that's all right!"

How he got on afterwards, I don't know; but from the confidence with which Ivor took me to his heap I gathered that now and then he must have relieved the careless Swede of some of his gold.

So you see even this time I did not make a bad bargain with a gold-digger.

THE IRISHMAN'S GOOD LUCK

We left the Kobuk the same day, and set out on our journey back to the Mackenzie. We moved again through the forests to Alatna; on the way we halted for those who still owed me something. We got our money in every case, only I was worried about that Irishman from Kentucky. It was always in my mind that he was working in winter, so that things must have been pretty bad with him, and so I went to the gold-diggers' settlement, where he lived, with strange feelings of hope and anxiety. At moments I comforted myself that perhaps my usual good luck had not deserted me. As a matter of fact, on my way to the Kobuk I had not lost; on the contrary, I was more satisfied than with any other trip. We all had a tough

time on that march, but I must admit it was worth while. I had got enough gold, and our sledges were piled up with furs, but who would cheerfully forgo a profit from the Irishman from Kentucky? My pleasure would be greater still, I thought, if that man paid.

I knocked at the door of his cabin. He was not at home. I found out that he was working on his claim, so I set out to find him. It was not very far, only a bit lower down the stream.

"Boy," the Irishman welcomed me with a bright face, "you are coming as if sent for."

There was little to be done; I could scream aloud.

"Well, well," I said facetiously: "Not really!"

"May the devil take you!" he laughed. "You have got a sharp nose. If you had come two days earlier you would not have been able to shake a grain out of me. It was as bad as that."

"Well, and it's all right now?" I asked.

"What! Right!" he exulted. "It's perfect, excellent! The last two days I have been shovelling up on every spade gold worth a thousand. That was a pocket!"

So it was. That man mined in two days close on two hundred and fifty thousand dollars of gold in one single spot. I looked to see what it was like. I had a look at everything, and we went into the cabin where we made up our accounts. He paid generously for the whole lot, but when I saw him so cheerful and willing I began complaining that on my way to the Kobuk I had not earned anything, instead I had actually lost, and I was at my wits' end to know how to pay the director of the

company for what I had taken. Then I told the Irishman that I had let him have the goods dirt cheap, and that he ought to pay me some interest.

He gave me another handful of gold; I thanked him, and we began to think of getting along.

I ought to say that I met that man several times afterwards, and I was interested in his history. I heard that in that place, where in two days he had become rich, he did not find anything at all afterwards, although he ran tunnels in all directions. The gold was in one spot, in a pocket, as the gold-diggers say.

DIDDLED

But once I was diddled. It was by a Swede, but not Erickson. That time I had goods from the warehouse on Herschel Island, and was delivering them to the gold-diggers.

On Buster-creek close on a hundred gold-diggers were working at that time, and they had no hired men, because the wages were too high and the ground did not yield enough gold. They were poor beggars to whom I sold quite a lot, but with one exception they were honest. The dishonest one was called Johnson. I trusted him with goods for thirteen thousand dollars. At this job when spring began I used slowly to return to the great delta, collecting money from my debtors. On some expeditions I got all my money back without any trouble, I was not delayed anywhere, so that I got to the mouth of the Mackenzie while it was still

frozen, but many times I was kept back so much that I had to sail down the stream.

Well, that spring I made the usual round of my creditors, one by one, till I came to Buster-creek. Not far from there I saw the little Australian with broad teeth, Joe Murray, who was catching fish there in a brook running into the Mackenzie. I had a chat with him, and Murray mentioned casually that there was something queer with Johnson; he would like to get away, because he owed somebody thirteen thousand dollars.

I felt as if I had been shot. You could swear by Murray's word; I knew that he was a hunter who had been living in Canada for many years, and never told lies. I set out as fast as I could with my two companions, and helpers, the Eskimos John and Mick, to the gold-diggers' settlement. There I heard that Johnson had washed gold in a hurry in a small trench so as to get through the job quicker, and he had just left.

I set out at once on his tracks. We dashed away like the wind; we did not lose sight of the tracks, and we had good hopes of overtaking the dishonest man. He could not escape, he would obviously want to cross the frozen Mackenzie, but I should cross as well and catch him on the other bank. We flew, and flew. In a short time we should be at the river! I urged on my team.

At last—what was it? I heard cracking and roaring. Had the icy armour broken? The last few seconds: there, there was the bank!

I stood there with a broad muddy stream in front of me. Our mad drive, lasting two and a half days,

was all in vain! The Swede had crossed over the ice, but the Mackenzie would not let us through.

After some time I came to the boat, and there I sadly announced to the manager of the warehouse that Andy Johnson had run away. The manager of the society became serious and said that I must pay for the goods, otherwise he would confiscate my dogs and the sledges. I told him to try, I had enough blue beans. By this I meant bullets. The manager laughed. They also had blue beans, but it need not go as far as that between us; there was a better cure; all I had to do was to go a few times more with goods among the gold-diggers and hunters to places where they had found plenty of gold this year, and where they did not care how much they paid: I need only put up the prices a bit. I piled on the sledges as much as the dogs could pull: I went to the gold-fields, I looked at everything and started to do business. They were all Irish, and nearly all had been amazingly lucky in finding gold. I kept on selling things; they swore at the high prices, but they all paid up. I sold everything: I returned to the boat and loaded goods a second time: then I went a third time, and a fourth; and the thirteen thousand dollars were mine, besides a fair profit as well. So after all not even on this second bad bargain did I lose anything.

CATCHING BIRDS

I have not mentioned the birds yet, which in Canada, and in Alaska are very numerous. One can see

mountain eagles everywhere in Alaska, but they only go there for the summer, otherwise, so they say, these big birds live in California. Most of them live in the mountains, I saw many in the Rockies in Northern Canada. They are rather dangerous birds. Other birds of prey are the hawks, and then the smaller mountain eagles, which are just as dangerous as their bigger cousins, and sometimes they even attack puppies, or babies. I have heard Polar men say that such a demon would even go for a wolf. Otherwise they chiefly catch fish on the shore. Hunters usually watch where an eagle flies regularly, for there it has its nest; they shoot the old ones, empty the nest, and they send the young birds to zoological gardens. This bird stays in the North from May to September.

Large flocks of wild ducks, geese, and swans migrate into the whole of Northern Alaska in May. I saw most of them between Point Barrow and Herschel Island. They were also with us on the New Siberian Islands, but in far fewer numbers. There were also huge flocks of these birds in Northern Canada, near the lakes. Sometimes the geese and swans flew together in such numbers that they almost darkened the sky. Often it took a quarter of an hour for a flock to pass over. Polar men shoot at flocks of geese and swans with large shot, 18/18. Often with one shot aimed into a biggish flock they can kill up to thirty birds. A goose weighs from twelve to sixteen pounds, a swan up to fifty. The swans are dark grey with a black beak; the geese and ducks are light grey, with white on the breast. Once wild geese flew over New Siberia in such a

flock that we rushed out and shot like mad, and the birds just rained from the sky. Good Lord, that was a godsend! We all had such enormous supplies of food that each of us could have a goose a week right through the whole winter and following summer.

In Northern Alaska, and Canada these birds feed mainly on small fish in the lakes, near which they live. They like best to find tiny islands in the lakes where they lay their eggs and hatch them out. We often made for these small islands to get the fresh eggs there. Sometimes we were lucky and got whole nests full, but at other times the result of a long search was a heap of eggs just ready for hatching. Sometimes again these birds settled on deeper water where we could not get at them easily, but then we always made a note of the places, and if we came that way in autumn the birds fared badly. For they fatten so much during the summer that they can hardly fly. We used to have with us dogs trained to scent them out, and round them up, and then swim behind them, in the swamps or lakes. In this way you can sometimes catch eight hundred geese and swans in a day. The Eskimos used to throw their kayaks on the water and pick up the birds by hand.

We did the same thing in the New Siberian Islands. What a pity that in summer we were not near the river Mackenzie, for there swans were still more numerous. The Eskimos sometimes travelled late in spring to the Mackenzie for the sole purpose of catching geese and swans. They went far south up the

river to places called the Mackenzie-flats, where the river divides into many narrow channels, and there they spent the whole summer catching birds and collecting eggs. On the banks of the channels between the water and the forest there is a thick belt of bushes, something like willows, and there in summer there are hundreds and millions of all kinds of birds. Very common there is a bird which we called willow-grouse, and another which we used to call a grebe. The willow-grouse is almost as big as a duck, and looks like a pheasant. It can run very fast, but when it gets fat it can hardly move its legs, and sometimes it can't even crawl out of the bushes. It roosts in the trees. The grebe is a bit bigger than a pigeon, and weighs about two pounds, while the willow-grouse weighs up to eight pounds. Both these birds feed on small fish in the river and lakes, about as big as sardines, which we call booth fish, and which in August or September are so numerous that these birds literally tread on them. Then they get so fat that just like wild geese and swans they can't fly away, and the Eskimos catch them with their bare hands.

So we set out to catch birds. We came to the Mackenzie at the right time, and our bag was so big that after a few days we moved to Herschel Island where the manager of the company was expecting us. I paid for everything, and he paid me my share; but then we had to wait for a boat to take us to Nome, and there Emerson would take us home when he came to do his shopping.

THE GOLD SEA

Towards the end of spring a whaler was leaving the big Mackenzie delta for Nome and the South. Its captain was willing to take us on board, and so we got to Nome with a profit from my big trading trip, consisting of furs, gold, dogs and sledges, which I never dreamed was possible. There we disembarked; I at once went to the warehouses and bartered furs; in the banks I changed the gold; I paid the eight Eskimos decent wages, which of course were not so big, because all the dogs we had taken on the expedition belonged to me. Now I had to wait till friend Emerson came to fetch us over from New Siberia. You can imagine that we were not lounging there in the saloons wasting God's time. We delivered food into the surrounding districts, we acted as carriers, and here and there we did some business on our own account, although the profits were very small. Suddenly thousands of people rushed to the place, all new faces, who had never been there before. These people seemed to be waiting for something which was just about to take place.

I asked what it was.

"They're waiting for the storm," people told me.

"I should like to know what kind of a storm."

I questioned these people, who were suffering frightfully from hunger, because they were not known here, and nobody had any work for them; and I learned something that I could hardly believe. They told me that in some years, in August, when a strong north-east storm comes, there is such an ebb tide that the

sea recedes from the shore from ten to twelve miles. There is supposed to be an enormous amount of gold on the bottom of the sea, and that was what these people were waiting for.

Well I wouldn't mind waiting for it too! I thought to myself.

And so I walked among the people, and tried to find out how they would tackle the job. I found that they had already made an agreement that on the bottom of the sea they would keep a distance of twenty-five feet from each other, so as not to get in one another's way during the great scramble. Some of them had small boats ready, and all of them had shovels. Some already had an instrument with them for washing out the gold, which they called the ruckers, or Long Tom. It was a kind of short trough with a box on the top. You had to throw the sand in the box, and then pour water on it from above, which ran down and washed the gold. I had known of this affair for a long time, because many gold-diggers, when they were hard up, had to wash out their gold in this way to get hold of it as quick as possible. Other people who were waiting had silvered plates. They told me that the plate is rubbed over with a lemon, then mercury is poured over it to form a layer. It sticks quite well, they said. The sand with the gold is thrown on to the plate, which is held slanting; the mercury dissolves the gold while the sand falls off. When there is enough gold in the mercury it is removed with a rubber scraper, the plate is again wiped with a lemon, covered with mercury, and so it goes on.

I met among these people many really poor devils who were waiting for the storm as if for their last salvation. After that there was only the revolver for them. Now you can imagine what a fever and restlessness pervaded the place.

Then one day a buzzing north-east storm really set in, and as soon as the hour of the regular ebb tide approached the sea began to recede and recede and left its bed exposed. Just then—but I had never seen before anything like what happened at that moment! Everybody dashed away, people like flies rushed for the sea bottom; and when I saw them, I ran to see their madness at close quarters. It was a tremendous fun, if only one looked on. They immediately threw themselves on the spots which they fancied most, and they worked as if they had lost their senses. Here two worked together; one poured water into the little machine, the other threw in the sand; some worked with mercury; many stood in the water and had boats with them. A feeling of horror fell on me as I watched this human struggle, and dreadful scramble. None of these people, I am sure, thought of anything else but making money.

I walked among them, but nobody even glanced at me. I stood by one man, and for a while I watched him in amazement. He had such amazing luck; on his shovel he took up perhaps a thousand dollars at a time. It was pure gold, as fine as oatmeal gruel, and the biggest pieces in it were only about as big as peas. But on the other hand there was as much of this fine gold as sand. That man just kept on shovelling and shovelling.

"God bless you, man, you are lucky!" said I, beginning to talk with him. But he kept on shovelling as if unconscious of anything else, he saw nothing but gold.

"What's your name? I guess we've seen each other before!" I droned right in his ear. But he might have been deaf, he paid no attention to me, and made no reply.

I went a bit further—the same thing again. Again there was a man who kept shovelling and shovelling.

"Slowly, slowly, or there will be nothing left." I tried to crack a joke with him: "You have luck, mate!"

"Not before time," he answered.

It seemed to me he might be a Slav by the accent: therefore I went on: "What country are you from?"

"A Czech from Paskov, Washington."

"Well, well, I know that language, but not very well now. How do you live here?"

"I was an engine-driver on the Burlington Railway —and now leave me alone, and mind your own business."

I went on, here and there I asked more questions, but I got few kind answers. In some places I saw people getting rich before my eyes, in others mere vain drudgery, despair and disappointment, depending on how God cared for them.

I walked for five hours and a half on the bed of the ocean, but the sea began to return: everybody kept working till the very last minute, yes, yes, the sea was already there, and those people were still mining!

Those who had boats did well, they just got into them, and the water carried them to the shore.

Then, of course, Nome had a holiday. It is true there were many who were as poor as ever, but there were many who had become rich between ebb and flood tide. I asked how much they had made, and I can assure you that a fortune of eighteen thousand dollars was not at all exceptional.

On my visits to Nome later on, I saw this comedy again twice, and I never stayed behind in comfort, but ran over the wet sandy bottom for several miles. But I was not looking for anything, and I should hardly have found anything there: I was not fit for such a feverish and crazy job.

The gold-diggers are certain that in the North, in Bering Straits, there must be gold worth colossal millions. They say that the beds of gold run for something like twelve miles, and it would be a fine thing if one day the sea dried up. But since there was no hope of that happening a company was formed later on in Nome which built a boat with a dredging machine on it, and this brought the sand with gold in it up from the bottom. This company, however, soon disappeared again. Since it was too deep to see to the bottom, and much of the sand dredged up was barren, the profit was not good enough to cover expenses.

These people then got nothing from that sea gold, but other cleverer men became quite rich; for they began to think, and after inspecting the country they realized that the gold must have been washed into the sea. There were a number of dry gulleys near the shore

through which in previous times water must have flowed. These gulleys were narrow, in places only four yards wide. These men started to examine the gulleys. In one of them, called Little-creek, they hit on the ryem, which is the rock forming the layer above the sand. But they had courage these people: they blasted the rock away till they got to the black sand, which is called the chicken-foot gravel. At a depth of about thirty feet they hit on a blue sand in which there was so much gold that they all got rich. But the work did not last very long, the gold spring soon dried up. If a lot of gold is found all in one spot like this it is called a pocket.

On this Little-creek, about three kilometres from Nome, near the local railway line to Kogoruk, there was a Czech, Joe Křeček, who was working with another countryman, who was called Mike Johanek. The richest ryem was just next to their claim, but these two Czechs also got a lot, and when they had worked out they both went to Nome and began to trade in furs there. Mike Johanek travelled in Alaska, usually up the Yukon, several times as far as the Tanana, and bought furs both from the Indians and the white men; Křeček looked after the business in Siberia and Kamchatka. He dealt mainly in live beavers, and their fur. Both these men became very prosperous.

After some time Erickson came with his boat to Nome. It should be made clear that we told each other everything about our business; I shipped everything I had made on my trading trip, and we set out on the

usual round: first to the remote islands, where we bartered our goods, and then home, because I had to deliver provisions to my customers who were relying on me.

And the same procedure took place every year. As soon as I had got together a tidy sum of money I went round my friends and paid off another instalment for the boat. Again it was MacDonald who did not want to take the money, he said that I must first get firmly on my feet; he had enough; he was not anxious to have it. But I pressed on him piles of valuable furs so that the boat would be mine as soon as possible.

IV

HUNTING IN ALASKA

In Alaska, where we often travelled in the next few years, we hunted sometimes in summer, sometimes in winter, mostly with traps, so that we could also supply the owners of fox farms with plenty of animals for crossing. We adopted here the same system as we had followed in Canada, and visited the vast regions, nearly all of which were rich in game, year after year in rotation. It is true the animals did not swarm there in such numbers as they had done in Northern Canada, for instance in the valley of the Yukon, and a few of the districts were already occupied by hunting expeditions. Finally I must admit that the fur of the animals in Alaska is no match for that of the animals living in Northern Canada, not to mention the snow-white coats of those living in the Arctic Ocean. But still we went to Alaska rather than to the river Mackenzie, because, after all, Northern Canada is a bit out of the way, and the difficulties of getting there are stupendous. In Alaska the journeys were also troublesome and really dangerous: we did not walk on metalled roads, but just as in Canada we slipped and stumbled, sometimes on trails, sometimes not; through forests, swamps, tundra, and rocks; harassed by frost, storms, beasts, mosquitoes, hunger, and illness. But, at any rate, hunters in Alaska more often come across settlements of prospectors, or some odd stream on

which there are many gold-diggers; they make a living more easily, and they need not be so much frightened of bad luck while hunting. For me in particular Alaska was a place of very active trade, and I made lots of money there, and established many new business connections through delivering the post; and, in general, by transporting gold-diggers' and hunters' equipment to settlements which were so far out of the way that it was not worth while for the State post to send dog teams there.

THE ICE BLOCK IN BERING STRAITS

I will describe one expedition just to show that travelling to Alaska, and into its interior, was not just a pleasant excursion. Well, from the New Siberian Islands we went to Alaska on a whaling boat in July, as soon as the ice began to break. The ocean presented an interesting spectacle. Huge floes, miles and even tens of miles long and wide, slowly floated south to Bering Straits. The flood tide held them back, the ebb tide took them on. Generally nearly all the ice disappeared by the end of July, but even then big fragments of the ice sheet still floated on the waves. In some years I could see them from on board a ship right through the whole summer. Sometimes at the end of July a strong south wind set in, but the tide was strong, and held the ice back, so that in Bering Straits a tremendous block was formed which brought many human lives to a sad end. In such cases it is almost impossible to get to Nome, only a very clever

captain dare sail through the floes, which drift here and there, smash against each other, and crack with a noise like thunder. It was like this in that particular year. The floes sometimes piled one above the other to the height of a big house; at times the boat was hemmed in on all sides, and then one had to blast the ice away with dynamite or nitro-glycerine. But men in the Arctic are experts at this kind of job. They have a good look at the ice formation, and sometimes blast away only a small bit sticking out; after the shot the mountain loses its balance and rolls over in the sea. It is a fine sight.

Also on the river Yukon, where the ice breaks up at the beginning of May, we saw similar ice blocks later on, and once in a journey of forty miles we had to blast our way through the ice six different times. If in some spot the ice floes pile up right across the river, and the water cannot get away, in one or two hours the water above the barrier rises, until it is held up for sixty miles and floods everything far and wide. I have seen tremendous floods on the Yukon, when whole forests stood under water. Fortunately these floods did not cause much damage because on the Yukon all the settlements and reservations are placed very high, away from the river, so that not even the worst floods can harm them.

PORT ST. MICHAEL

An important centre for expeditions to Alaska is the small town, St. Michael. It began at the same time as

they started to dig gold at Nome, in 1900, near the northern delta of the Yukon. The harbour is much better than that at Nome or Teller.

The water is deep, so that the biggest steamers can get right into the harbour, which cuts deeply into the side of the bay. It is surrounded by rocks. It lies not far from Kotlik, or from Romanov Point. On the opposite side the town runs up to a big Eskimo reservation, Una La Cleet. The post goes there from New Siberia. It is the most important port for a boat going from the Yukon or the Kuskokwime.

In those early days there were only a few small shops in St. Michael, but two or three years later big commercial firms settled there which managed the steamship and trading services on the Yukon: as, for instance, the North American Transport and Trading Company, as well as the Northern Commercial Company, the North-Western Steamship and Commercial Company, the other smaller ones as well. So the little town slowly began to grow, and soon it was very lively there. Gold-diggers arrived from all sides for the Yukon, and scoundrels, embezzlers, thieves, and prostitutes as well; in short, all those who could manage to get there. Competition began to be keen there, people had to think twice how to earn any money, and bright ideas kept turning up.

MOSES' BEARS

I remember, for instance, what a fortune old Moses made, a poor Irishman who had struggled hard all his

life. At the beginning he did any odd job, but for many years he had tamed wild animals for circuses and zoological gardens. In those days people never dreamed of gold in Alaska, and Moses who was already there, made his living chiefly by catching bears, taming them and selling them at a small profit. But when the village of St. Michael began to grow, Moses moved there and opened a saloon which was far and away the most famous of all public houses; not for its liquor but for two bears. They were both perfectly trained, and they were as clever as human beings. One of them always stood at the door of the saloon, and acted as porter, the other amused the people inside by drinking any beer which they gave him. He stood on his hind legs near the bar, and waited till a jolly guest arrived, who gave him beer and drank his health. Of course the bear could only drink from a bottle: he held it in his front paws, and emptied it into his mouth. It was great fun.

The innkeeper watched, and when he thought that the bear had had enough he sent it to act as porter, and the previous doorkeeper came into the saloon, in turn to drink its fill. Of course, the innkeeper had to be careful not to let one of his bears get drunk, for then it might knock all the guests about. When changed at proper intervals the bears stood this treatment very well, but often the company was boozy and jolly and made fun of them. I myself once saw how they treated them. They gave one an empty bottle; the bear tipped it up, and sucked, and for a long time he sucked hopefully, but suddenly it dawned on him that he had been

cheated. He did not make any sign, but went somewhere at the back, and returned with a pail of water, which he poured out among the guests. We all rolled with laughter, but some people ran out, because they were frightened, not knowing what might happen next. But nothing happened, instead, the bear's good humour returned at once when the guests gave him a bottle of beer.

These two bears brought to this saloon so many people that it was always full. People even got up early, and hurried to the bar to see the bears tidying up. I myself got up several times at four o'clock in the morning and went to the saloon to see that interesting show. One bear splashed water over the floor and the other swept. They stood on their hind legs, and so they worked without minding anyone.

Moses kept his bears until 1917, when all the saloons were closed, and when the sale of liquor was prohibited. During all the fifteen years that the Irishman had the bears the other innkeepers kept making protests to the authorities, but nothing was done. They say, however, that they had their revenge in 1918, when Moses died a very rich man. They took away the bears, nobody knew where, and even the wealth of that rich Irishman vanished somehow.

For a long time there was keen competition between Nome and St. Michael to be the most important town. But after the War, when gold-mining declined, both towns lost something of their importance; they are quiet now, and the people who remain are mostly Eskimos.

THROUGH SANDS AND SWAMPS, AND OVER FIELDS OF LAVA

Well then, from St. Michael we used to set out for the interior of Alaska. I do not know with which of these dreadful journeys I should begin; I don't even know which of them was the worst. The one freshest in my memory is the one which I cursed so many times: the journey from Kobuk Divide to the Mackenzie.

It usually took a month. First come sands, then forests, swamps, tundra, and at last boundless fields of lava, stretching out for hundreds and hundreds of miles. In June or July it was impossible to get through, because water stood two feet deep on the tundra, as far as the eye could see, and over the swamps there were black clouds of mosquitoes. Therefore we used to go into those regions in September, and at the beginning of October, when frost and snow came to help the dogs and sledges along. Later on, in winter, again one could not move, because of the dreadful frosts and Polar storms. The hunter who is bold enough to try to get through this country must be well provided with water, paraffin and alcohol; because when he reaches the fields of lava he won't find a mouthful of water, or a chip of wood with which to make a fire, and cook his food, or make tea.

I used to drive through that region with ninety dogs; I also used to go there with expeditions when they could not take on their own sledges all the food and supplies they needed, and so for a decent reward I helped them out with my team, or with dogs which I

had borrowed. I had two sledges: a big one on which I carried foreign provisions, the other, a smaller one, on which I loaded foodstuffs for myself, and provisions for the dogs. Sometimes we went to Point Barrow, but most frequently to the big delta of the Mackenzie. I earned on such a journey, on which I sometimes took the post as well, such a lot of money, especially through trading in furs in lonely reservations, that I was keen on going again and again, even although it was so murderous. I think there must be few people in Alaska who can tell of the horrors of that journey as well as I can. How many people died there of exhaustion, or from a sudden attack of pneumonia!

Even to-day I can't say where it was worse. Often a corpse lying in the snow was a dumb and sad witness that the expedition just in front of us was poorer by one member. The others dare not waste time over the burial; they had to get on and on, or there would soon have been another corpse lying in a snow-drift. Many dogs also perished. Sometimes the owner of the team lost so many dogs that the load was too heavy for the rest, and the miserable man had to make the sledge lighter by throwing away one thing after another until he alone was left, and in the end he perished or shot himself in despair.

I saw and lived through many adventures there. People of our own party lost their lives; I remember even now an Eskimo who suddenly cried out, and when we ran to him, we found that his neck was bitten through. Between his groans he managed to whisper that a lynx had jumped on him; and he died

in my arms while I was binding up his wounds. At other times whole packs of wolves roamed through the country attacking lynxes and moose, and more than once we found a dead wolf pierced through by the horn of a moose. You met with every sort of thing on those dreadful journeys.

SOUTH OF THE YUKON

Sometimes we made expeditions into the regions south of the river Yukon; particularly to the hunting grounds round the sources of the rivers Kuskokwime, Innoko, Iditorat, Konteshna, Delta, Tanana, Sushitna, and the Copper River.

The starting-place for our expedition on the Innoko was St. Michael, or Unalaklik, north of there we then went through the Russian mission, lying on the Yukon, straight to the Kuskokwime. There also the country is rich in game, which hunters have been sending for a very long time to the whole world, and especially to the United States. Most of them work on the upper Kuskokwime, and mainly on its tributary, the Chodotlothna, the river which the natives call the Hoholitna, which flows past the highest mountain in Alaska, Mount McKinley. To-day the country is mostly inhabited by white hunters; many of them are descendants of escaped Siberian convicts and of native women. When I travelled through those parts with my dogs, I saw women who looked like pure-blooded Indians, but had fair hair and blue eyes. Some of them were very beautiful. Ancient costumes were worn there by the

natives, and the chiefs wore some sort of chain of bones which was customary long ago.

The Indians, who many decades ago had migrated from the country round the Kuskokwime, and Hoholitna, settled on the rivers Innoko and Iditorat, where they now live together in reservations, and spread through the forests as far as the so-called Dead Indian Trail, a dangerous pass to the tremendous river Tanana. It really was astonishing how bold the animals were in that part of the country: day and night we had no peace, we always had to be on our guard. Danger threatened us not only from the ground, but from the air as well. As soon as we made camp for the night some birds, something like hawks, or night owls, began to attack our dogs. Of course, they could not take a dog right away, but they often wounded them until they bled. Even men were sometimes attacked, so that in these places we used to put our heads into sacks for the night, and were afraid to take them out before dawn. Camping in those forests was rather different from what it was in other hunting places. We used to sleep near fires, the dogs spread out in a circle round us, and the whole camp was enclosed by another circle made by the sledges. While the fires were burning it was all right; as soon as they died down all sorts of beasts, and a motley assortment of birds approached; the dogs howled, and threw themselves about; the hunters woke, swore and shot at random into the darkness, into the forest, and into the air. We could get no decent rest there. We estimated in some places that there were five hundred lynxes to

every mile of the journey, a number which certainly inspires the greatest caution when travelling there.

But besides all that there were the foxes which were the main reason for our expeditions. We caught there mainly young foxes for crossing. We had dogs, specially trained, which found the lair, usually under a fallen tree, or in holes in the ground. We shot the old ones, and took away the young. Of course we did not take whole waggonfuls of them, it is not so easy with foxes. Perhaps we were fifty men, and the bag was a hundred foxes. Most of them were near the river Konteshna. It is true, there were other animals as well, even the fur of a lynx is not bad. We caught lynxes mostly with snares, the same kind as for hares or rabbits. It is a striking fact that wherever there are tracks of a hare or rabbit those of a lynx appear immediately behind them. Between two snares placed one in front of the other we put a hare's head in the snow. The noose was fourteen inches high, and for rabbits only eight inches above the ground. People living in European towns may laugh at these details, but if they only knew how necessary it all was, how every single point was the result of bitter experience, how many lives had been lost, how many people thrown into despair by failure, before the most advantageous method had been found, they would be able to appreciate better the importance of even such small bits of knowledge.

The interesting fact that some animals die out after a period of four or seven years, and then appear again in abnormal numbers, was demonstrated to an almost

staggering degree in the country round the Innoko, and the Kuskokwime. Once with iron pipes, about half a yard long, we knocked dead close on five hundred hares in an hour. These animals were used as food for foxes on the farms, which were very numerous there. A young fox fed with hare's flesh grows so fast that in autumn, when it is not half a year old, it is as big as one fully grown. On the other hand the following year, perhaps, hunters would not dream of sending hares to the farms, for they themselves often had nothing to put into their mouths, for hares were very scarce, and they were glad to catch enough to make a dinner for themselves. The foxes then, of course, had to content themselves with plainer food.

The huge swarms of rabbits, and hares, were usually followed by packs of wolves. Then we had to look out. But once we all had to climb trees as quickly as we could, because all of a sudden a pack of about fifty wolves appeared close on our heels. In that case it was, of course, more a matter of precaution, because a wolf never thinks of attacking men if it can get plenty of better meat. Wolverines are much worse than wolves; a hunter is never safe from them on the Mackenzie, Kobuk, Koyukuk, or in the Rockies; they are the same everywhere.

MOOSE FARMS

Another animal which was very abundant in the country between the Innoko, Dead Indian Trail, and the Tanana was the moose. Everywhere there we came

across farms for moose, large and small. These farmers have byres full of tame moose, which they feed with hay cut from the huge meadows in the forests. When a cow moose has been brought up in captivity she is very tame, and there is no fear that she will go astray, and not return home from pasture. By making use of her the farmers catch others. They put a big strap round her neck on which hang little bells; then as she goes in the forest and meadows the bells tinkle. Sometimes she attracts a bull, which stays with her, and even goes with her in the evening home to the farm, where the farmer has set the gate open ready. This gate slides up and down: the farmer waits in the loft above with the gate drawn up, and when he sees that the bull has entered the stall he lets it fall, and the bull is caught. Even the bulls can be tamed quite easily, and the farmers keep them for breeding purposes. As soon as there is a little herd of five or ten cows they are taken out every day to graze, and they never run away, even a bull does not think of returning to the forest. Instead, others join, and soon from a small beginning there is a big herd. Usually, however, the farmers kill for meat the animals which they have caught in this way. The farmer waits in the loft above the stall when the cattle are returning from pasture. The beasts come up to the trough; the tame moose at once begins to eat hay in its usual place and the wild one stands a short distance away, its curiosity aroused. Just then the report thunders out, and the visitor rolls over right in the stall. The farmer harnesses two bulls and drags the dead animal away. He has to

remove every drop of blood very carefully, otherwise the wild moose would never go there again.

A moose usually weighs between three and four hundredweights, but I have seen specimens which were close on eight hundredweights. The owners of moose farms milk the cows, and from the bluish milk they make cheese. This food has a nauseating smell, but it is tasty and healthy, because moose eat the best grass and moss. But when one of them only eats moss the milk and cheese is bad. Once I made coffee from moose milk, but my stomach could not stand it. Nobody ever afterwards caught me with moose milk.

When the moose cow has a young one the calf is usually only left with her for eight days; afterwards it is taken to pasture. It is a graceful and sweet little thing, and it grows very fast. If born in spring it is full-grown by the autumn. Some people sell the calves for meat.

Besides moose they hunt caribou in this region in just the same way. This is the Canadian stag which is found mainly near the river Konteshna and Dead Indian Trail, and along the Innoko and Iditorat. Caribou live together usually in big herds, and the hunters mostly catch them alive to take them to their farms. They can be trained much more easily than moose to work in harness, their milk is better, and they serve the same purpose as moose. They become tame much quicker than moose, and they are very affectionate, so that it is a real pleasure to keep these animals. I often envied the farmers. It is interesting how easily they catch them. They put up on a meadow

a hut, open on all four sides, and there the caribou come to shelter in bad weather. As the time goes on the animals get so accustomed to the hut, that before the weather has time to turn bad the farmer goes to the hut, waits there, and when the caribou come up he quietly shoots them down. From their skins they make trousers, coats, and caps for the Eskimos.

ACROSS AN ICY ABYSS

We also travelled once into Alaska, from the south, from the Pacific coast, where the land right near the sea rises to great heights. We set out not far from the mouth of the river Sushitna, over the lofty mountains, following the trail before the road had been built along the river. Our party consisted of hunters, and two Indians, and we were making for the Tanana and the fox farms there, because we wanted to get into touch with the farmers. In those days the country was being surveyed, and one always talked of the fine road which would pass through this district; but the work went on very slowly, and all those who had to make their way through those parts for the North grumbled a good deal, because there was not even a small bridge across a dangerous crevasse on the Glacier, which we simply called by that name. Many people met their fate on that glacier. It was a hard nut to crack for those who went there in summer, as we did. In winter it was covered with snow, and with snow-shoes the going was easy. But in summer the face was slippery, and in some places big crevasses appeared,

and often a foot slipped, and the poor man flew down the ice until he disappeared in an icy gorge. I was told that in one year seven men fell down into one crevasse.

On the way up, at the bottom of the glacier, we fixed special pieces of wood on our feet to prevent our boots from slipping so much. I can't find words to describe how we managed to scramble up that glacier: my feet slipped two hundred times at least before, perspiring and exhausted, I, at last, reached the top. Here we took the pieces of wood off and sat on them, and slowly we went down the other side to the icy abyss. We thought that it would be a rift about two feet or a yard wide which we could jump over easily; but it proved to be about two yards across. We stopped and wondered whether we should throw our baggage over, and jump. On the ground a man can jump two yards on one leg, but think of jumping when you are not sure that your feet won't slip, and when you know that underneath a chasm is yawning, where already there are many corpses lying! So with heavy hearts and with much cursing we decided to return, and drag logs up from the forest, right below the glacier, to make a simple little bridge over which we could cross. Again we put the pieces of wood on our feet, and started on the bitter pilgrimage back. After laborious drudgery we succeeded, at last, in getting a few little logs to the abyss, we made a bridge, and on all fours we crawled to the other side. We all got over safely; and only when we were all across we went back to the bridge one by one, and carefully lay down there on our faces, and looked down. Horror came over us as

we peered into this icy chasm, about fifty yards deep. There were several dead bodies at the bottom. I saw a huge bearded figure leaning against the wall of ice; he stood there as if he were resting, at his feet another lay on his back with his eyes open; just near his head another figure crouched. The carcasses of two horses were also there.

With mingled thoughts we moved on, and about fifteen miles from the glacier we descended to a place where the trail forked. One trail leads to the Iditorat, the other to the Kuskokwime. The way to the Kuskokwime is a miserable tundra where the lichen hillocks are only slightly raised. In parts, however, the region is entirely flooded. Here at the crossroads we were near Mount McKinley: we were only about fifteen miles away from it; but we set out to the forest in the direction of the river Delta, from there we wanted to get to Fairbanks and the river Tanana, and so return down the Tanana and the Yukon to St. Michael. Not far from the crossroads we overtook a red-haired German, whose name was Ertz, and who was a carpenter. He was very distressed, and told us that he had lost his friend, a carpenter called Müller, also a German, whose foot had slipped on the glacier, so that he fell into the abyss together with a heavy chest of tools which he was dragging.

DEAD INDIAN TRAIL

Not far from the district through which we were moving, leading also towards Fairbanks, but a bit

farther north, was Dead Indian Trail: a horrible region, where only hunters may venture who know the way perfectly. Very many Indians perished there years ago. The pilgrim, they say, gets into swamps, through which he wades for days and days, up to his thighs in mud. The Indians went in winter, but the snow was wet, and they fell through thin ice into the swamps, and so were drowned. I can't understand myself why, even in the most cruel frosts, the swamps there are covered with only a thin crust of ice. The Indians who died there were mostly from the Kuskokwime and the Iditorat, and they were going to Fairbanks when the gold-fever broke out. They wanted to make a better living by selling the flesh of the animals they hunted to the gold-diggers.

Not far from Dead Indian Trail the river Konteshna, which flows into the Tanana, twists and turns among the thickest forests. I had been there several times, but I had travelled from the west, from the river Iditorat, not from the south; and because we did not know the way from the crossroads behind the glacier to Dead Indian Trail, we headed from there to the river Delta. In all my life I have never seen so many foxes as in those forests, where literally one tree lies piled across the other. Nearly every fifth tree sheltered a fox's earth, in some there were young ones, while others were empty. We used to catch the young animals in a net in an interesting way. The hunter hides behind a tree, and watches where the young foxes run. Then he takes dogs to the place, the dogs scent the fox, the hunter pokes one side with a stick, and the net is held

at the other. The animals run straight into the net. The foxes caught in this way were put into wooden crates made of thin boards. In the same way we also caught wolverines and coyotes. An Alaskan coyote is about six inches bigger than a fox, and a bit longer; it is very suitable for crossing with all kinds of foxes.

We often had to fight with the old foxes, which went after us when we took away their young ones. But the mosquitoes bothered us still more, even with double netting we could not keep them away. They were more numerous than the leaves on the trees: they were in the air, in the grass, in the branches: everywhere you looked. It was impossible to get a quiet sleep at night: we had to make huge fires, and throw on heaps of green leaves to drive them away a little with the acrid smoke. But it did not help much. For the first time, however, during my sojourn in the Polar regions I caught a few blue foxes. I caught black foxes as well; here they are called silver Alaskan foxes, but their fur is less valuable than that of the real silver fox; and at that time they were worth three hundred dollars. It needs great skill, however, to catch a blue, or a black fox. They are very shy, and they can scent a hunter a long distance away: they then carry the young ones in their mouths and take refuge in inaccessible places in the swamps. Of course, now and then a chance comes when one can surprise them with their young ones. This fox is difficult to cross with other kinds.

Because of the enormous numbers of wild animals there are many fox farms in the country round the Delta and Tanana. These farms must be in the wood;

in fact, in part of the forest enclosed with a high fence. Some kinds of animals, the blue fox, for instance, never cross in close confinement, they must be kept at least in apparent freedom. I often saw how on the farms the fox scratched out a hole under a tree, and made a lair ready for the young ones. Bears and other animals are bred as well on the farms. The farmers were glad to trade with us, but they would not trust foreign traders much because of the innumerable times they had been cheated and deprived of as much as the fruits of a whole year's work.

I saw, however, most farms near Fairbanks, where sometimes within a distance of twenty miles there were five or six farms. At times a very valuable specimen was produced, but such a fox was always sold to the zoological gardens. From Fairbanks south to Waldes-Trail, where the Copper River flows into the Pacific Ocean, there is also in the forests an immense amount of game; but we did not go there, because a road had been made from Fairbanks to Waldes-Trail, three hundred miles long, and there carriages and cars could travel, so that there were so many hunters and parties of tourists to Alaska that there was no hope of making a good profit. There American men and women appeared, all dressed up, to have a look at that curious country, and so for us Alaska ended there. Every year valuable furs worth many millions of dollars were sent away from that region. We were told that wolverines were as common as sand in the sea; and many hunters there made their whole living by catching them. The whole region between Waldes-

Trail, Fairbanks, the Konteshna, Kuskokwime, and Sushitna can be called a paradise for hunters. Near the Konteshna most of the silver foxes in Alaska are caught; as well as thousands of moose and caribou.

When I remember my journeys through Alaska I see hardships everywhere, danger everywhere, privations of the worst kind; everywhere life hangs by a thread; men rush, often in despair and exhaustion, persecuted by all possible things; they drag themselves from one hellish place to another. And then I wonder whether a rich, fine lady, placing round her snow-white neck a fur from a silver or blue fox, thinks, at least sometimes, of the kind of men who caught those animals; what they suffered, how many miseries they endured, and how many friends they saw die in pursuit of that ornament. Will she think of it? I doubt it.

I SELL OLD RUBBISH

Oh, well, I often went to Alaska. And I must add that it was Alaska which made it much easier for me to pay the instalments to all my associates, and particularly to the greatest and the most lenient of my creditors, MacDonald. I made many good bargains there, but one was such a success that it gave me the greatest pleasure.

I have already described the great boom on Wrangel Island, and how a lawyer from Nome baited the gold-diggers there. I explained that the unhappy people, having eaten up everything in the warehouse of that speculator, were thrown into the greatest misery, and

that they moved in desperation from place to place until through hunger and want they became so crazy that they even tried to find gold in Franz Josef Land. Not a bad idea after all, but they could not even do that, for they had no money at all, or foodstuffs, for such a big undertaking. They only had their boilers, motors, and odd rummage: but even with that they hardly got as far as to where I lived in New Siberia. There they either sold it to me or pawned it, and they very nearly kissed my hands as well for letting them have anything at all for their old equipment.

Well, as a matter of fact, it was a heavy blow for my business. My storehouse was full of rusty iron; it got in the way, and still there was money in it.

I could do nothing. I made many inquiries, trying to find a buyer for the things, until all of a sudden I heard that on the river Iditorat in Alaska they had begun to dig for gold.

"And where, in which place?" I asked.

"Between Dist and Akaket."

I was astonished. I knew the region well and the way there. The Devil only knows why when there were not at least sixty degrees of frost a man fell through the ice into mud. That mud would not carry a man. The region was full of volcanoes; there were five or six volcanic lakes; but I don't know their names. I expect they have none.

I wondered at once whether I might also get some profit from those gold-mines. It was clear that I must be the first there to offer goods, but it would be a mistake to venture into places where gold-diggers

were going bankrupt. It meant then that I must find the men with most experience and have a good talk with them. Nobody could give me better information than the people I knew in St. Michael, so I quickly set out to see them. I came just at the right moment when everything was ready for me.

The gold-diggers wanted everything. The ground was rich: machines, food, spices, and especially men were needed, men, men, and again men: men who didn't want to mine but who would transport materials. Men like this and dogs were very scarce.

I at once offered my team of ninety dogs, my sledges, my services and the hands of my Eskimos. I was received almost in the same way as I was by the gold-diggers to whom I once brought the machine for pumping water. They would have hoisted me on their shoulders, although my services were not very cheap.

I asked fifteen dollars for a dog for a day. They gladly accepted it. I might have asked more, but I had something else in my mind: the old rummage with which my storehouse in New Siberia was stacked full. I had to get rid of it. The second condition was that the gold-diggers should buy from me the old machines. I must say that even about this they were enthusiastic: they needed them almost more than they wanted men.

Of course, such an expedition could not start at once. It was quite impossible, for it was summer, and in summer men can't go there with heavy loads, for not only would they fall through and disappear for ever in the mud, but there are such clouds of mosquitoes

that living creatures can't exist there. I saw tremendous numbers in the Siberian forests, but they were nothing compared with what it was like there. It seems incredible; they formed clouds which hid the sun.

I got to know that dreadful journey thoroughly. I saw men perish there, and I came across their sad remains. Many times a hunter drove on to the brittle covering of ice, or over the snow which treacherously covered the mud: to begin to drive was enough and rupp! he was through; he struggled to get out, and sank deeper and deeper, until at last, completely exhausted, he perished. Sometimes such a man had what you may call good luck. What this luck was like I'll tell you straight away. He got out, but the mire swallowed his things: life was safe, but not for long, for all he could do was to start again on his journey with not a scrap of food. Such a death took longer and such an unfortunate man nearly always lost his life unless, by sheer accident, he met another who could help him in that God-forsaken land.

I saw once by the marks in the mud that some man must have struggled there in agony to save himself. He was alone, helpless, and fought with death in desperation, until in the end he saved himself, and got out of the mud; but all his things had disappeared. Then he must have taken his revolver and shot himself. We found the dead body a little farther on, and by that we could understand how it had all happened.

I knew that way well, and all its horrors; but now good business beckoned me, and I should have been a poor trader if I had got frightened of the journey. As

quickly as possible I had all the pile of rusty iron taken from New Siberia to St. Michael, and as winter approached we started on our way. It was a colossal expedition: several hundred dogs, hundreds of sledges, up to three hundred strong men, and many Eskimos; with all that we set out. Those who can form an estimate of the amount of food necessary for so many people, and dogs, will understand how many hundredweights of dried fish had to be loaded on the sledges, and dragged along, how much meat, bacon, salt, pepper, and beans; and on top of that the machines and provisions for the gold-diggers: in fact it was as if an army were on the march into a country where nothing grew.

I knew the way, and therefore I led the expedition. But no one must think that I went like a general with my hands in my pockets. I had to sweat and work like everyone else; that was a matter of course. But I chose the way, and according to my judgment the roads were made and the heavy machines were transported.

At the beginning we could just keep moving, but later on we found ourselves in those damnable swamps, and it looked as if it were the end. The sledges kept falling through, men drudged the whole day, swearing horribly, to get even one sledge out, and as soon as they had done that another fell into the mire: twenty, thirty people had to work terribly hard to get them out, and as soon as that was done a message came from another part of the mile-long column that help was needed there. By the time we rested in the evening we were half dead with exhaustion. We hardly talked

at all; we slept on the sledges; after a short sleep we got up, lit our lanterns, and set out on the journey again.

I saw that it would be impossible to keep going on like that; the dogs were exhausted, the men could do no more, a long journey was still in front of us, and food was running short: so I called the gold-diggers together, and said:

"Boys, this won't do."

They all agreed, but what were they to do?

"We'll get the machines along in a different way; we will make sledges with wide runners, a kind of very wide ski, first the light machines will go ahead, then the heavier ones, and behind them the machines which are bigger still; then the sledges with food, and not till the very last the biggest and heaviest machines of all. While we make the sledges the dogs will get a rest."

The gold-diggers said that this was all right.

So we felled trees and made sledges. It was no easy job in that cold, but in three days we were already on the move. The six horse-power boilers went first, which weighed four hundredweights. They made a track, but it needed men and dogs to drag them along. Soon, however, we came to places where we could not get round the trees with our clumsy loads and sledges: we had to fell every tree in our way. Well, after all, that was comparatively easy, but then we had to go through the forest. Here the trails were narrow, and in places we had to keep away from the trail because it was too muddy. Then we found ourselves in the woods. What could we do but hack a way

through? However, we were so many that in an hour we had cleared a mile. Then later we got on to a clearing which lay surrounded by the forest: again for a bit everything went smoothly, but after one day's march we had once more to cut through two or three miles of forest.

At last we found ourselves with our loads at our destination. I almost had to laugh when I figured out that the price of a boiler, which in America cost two hundred and fifty dollars, was raised to thirty thousand by the carriage.

I earned a terrific amount of money, but after such a march I was three-parts dead. In spite of that I can say that this and a few other similar transactions were the best I had. I sweated like a nigger it is true, but at least I knew why I was sweating. My goal was in front; you know what it was, that one day I should stand on the bridge of *Laura*, and say to myself: "She is mine."

EXCAVATIONS

On my travels I kept an eye open for everything, if only because to a trader any odd thing might be useful, and money for the boat might come from the most unexpected sources. I also paid attention to various prehistoric and noteworthy finds, partly because I was interested to know what it was like at other times, partly, and not least, because anything might be sold. Of course, I ought to say that in this field I did not do any business at all at the beginning, but I don't say that I shall not do so when the right opportunity comes,

and that I shall not make a profit on it, for in America particularly people are crazy for anything that is noteworthy.

On my island I once discovered the mummy of an old chief buried ages ago. I crawled into his grave, examined everything carefully, I looked at the dead body, and to this day I still think that I shall find a man somewhere who will be interested in that discovery.

But this was neither the first nor the last of my finds. On various New Siberian Islands I often found caves where Eskimo families had lived. The caves were hundreds and hundreds of years old, and many things could be found there.

Once I found similar old caves in Northern Canada. They were five all told: they had very narrow entrances, and various odds and ends were inside. I found harpoons, daggers, and some kitchen utensils, everything made of mammoth bone. I stayed in that locality for three days, and tried to make out what all the things were for. After that I marked the place, and I left it with the thought that one day I should find people who would be interested in it, and to whom I could sell it.

At home I told the Eskimos of it, and they said that on Vladimir Island there were also caves. I had known of this already from the time when I used to go to the Far North. Later I verified their statements when I once went there to fish. I should not have found the caves, but my dogs who were looking for a cool corner crawled into the holes, and so they showed me where to look. I found in those caves a walrus made of stone,

a great quantity of kitchen utensils, all made of stone, harpoons, clothes, traps, and even an instrument for making fire. This thing was not very old, but it was certainly used by the people many years ago, because such things have not been in use in the North for a very long time. It looked like a square pot in which they rubbed with a piece of iron until the sparks flew. On the bottom there was dry moss which caught fire. There and then I tried whether I could kindle fire in that way and I found that it went quite easily.

I also found mammoth skeletons in many places. I wondered what to do with them, for I figured out that transport would cost so much that hardly anyone would pay me for them. So I just marked the places, and made a note in my pocket-book, because I think that they may come in handy some day. For during the years that I have been a business man I have come across many different kinds of people with the most varied requirements. I may even find someone who will be interested in those mammoths.

I always like to look at the tombstones in the Eskimo cemeteries, and I was very much surprised once when I went along the river Koyukuk, and saw the cemeteries there. I was still more excited when I heard what a lot of things had been found there. I saw that many different weapons had been found belonging to the dead people, which the Indians use at the present day. Many times, from what I saw, it seemed to me that the natives were once much better armed than they are at present.

In 1902 and 1903, when the gold-fever broke out

on the Koyukuk, prospectors going through that part of the country, camped in a certain spot, and looked for dry wood. They found a big hiding place in which there was a great assortment of ancient Indian traps for game, and nets made of fish-gut, all still in good condition. There were so many traps, all very well made, and other interesting things, that the find caused a great stir in the whole country. But the prospectors loaded the whole lot on a steamer which went that way, and they sold everything, so that few people really knew what all the things were which they had found. I only just heard of them myself.

Then the prospectors decided to continue, and they examined the whole region thoroughly. And why not? There were no gold-fields, and as for profit these finds were almost as good as gold. They found whole heaps of tools, and they also came across fine ancient hammers and little stone gimlets for boring bones. I got all the particulars from the gold-digger Nolan, of whom I already have spoken. He bought some of the things and sold them again.

Another similar case occurred between the Yukon and Tanana, not far from Fort Gibbon. There a German was working, whose name was Schneider. He had been in Alaska for many years, having gone there before the gold-fever began. He was a hunter, and had a farm on which he bred foxes, polecats, beavers, and sometimes even wolves. In summer he lived near water where he could catch fish, which he sold. He knew Alaska very well, because, as he told me, he had been living there since 1869.

When people began to dig gold at Hot Springs he also caught the fever: and he pegged a claim and began to dig. He had been digging for a long time, and he was already pretty deep, when suddenly he came across some bones. He turned his lamp on the things, because he thought it might be wood: but he dug it out and found it was a skull about two feet long. It looked like a crocodile, only in the skull there were three rows of teeth, one behind the other. I saw it with my own eyes. The teeth were very sharp, and well preserved, as if the animal had only recently died. But what of that, nobody knew what the animal really was!

But Schneider dug five or six yards deeper, and hit upon rock which was very much pressed together. And then he said to himself:

"Aha, here I shall find something more!"

And the first thing he found was the complete skeleton of that particular animal. He slowly scraped it out so as not to damage a single bone; he found another similar skull, and when he had it all nicely together he looked for the bones belonging to the second head. But he did not find anything more. Then he washed and bleached the bones nicely and fixed them together with wires, till he had the whole skeleton complete. But he was no wiser than before: nobody knew of such an animal. The beast had a body high in front, and low at the tail; it was long, something like a bear.

It roused a terrific interest in the country: people rushed there from all sides and everybody wanted to see the queer creation. But Schneider kept the beast

in a shed, and those who wanted to see it had to pay. There were some who gave him as much as a hundred dollars to satisfy their curiosity, but he would not talk with those who would not give him at least a dollar.

Later on Schneider moved with his animal to the Yukon, so that he could catch fish, and there he also had many customers, because things were very lively on the river. People talked of the find far and wide, but nobody could give a name to the animal.

The best of it all was that Schneider suddenly disappeared, together with the skeleton, and nobody ever heard of him afterwards. I don't know whether he sold the skeleton for a lot of money, or whether he was murdered, and the skeleton taken away somewhere. It was like that with us there.

On the river Innoko there was also a place where the Swedes were digging who had come from Ruby on the river Yukon. They dug there for gold, and they made an agreement that the first to find anything should take the others in as partners. And so they began digging, but in the first hole water suddenly appeared. They left it, and moved further away to the rocks, where they began to dig at a distance of a hundred feet from each other. They were three good friends, and they trusted one another completely, but one of them, still a youngster, was not so open, and he always preferred to dig alone. Besides that, as a gold-digger, he had a habit of always digging at the foot of a rock. He did the same this time. When he had dug about two yards into the earth it seemed to him by the sound that he was approaching some under-

ground cavern. He tapped the walls with a pickaxe, but he thought he was still some distance from the cave, and he went on digging. Suddenly, however, the rock broke away, his pickaxe flew from his hands, and he had a close shave in preventing himself from falling into the unknown space. He at once ran to his friends, and told them all about it.

They decided that they would lower him down on a rope to have a look and find out what was there. They were terribly curious, and thought that quite possibly there might be something very valuable there. The youngest Swede lowered himself down, and soon afterwards he announced to his friends that down below there was the skeleton of a big animal. They wondered what to do, and then they decided to dig out the skeleton, and take it up. They made a big opening into the cave, got inside, took measurements of the bones, and sent a description to Nome. From the figures they learned that they were dealing with a colossal mammoth; two other rich Swedes were quickly on the spot, but when they arrived they found the first three very much at a loss. The water had just rushed into the cave and flooded everything, and at the moment the bones were not visible at all. In spite of that the two Swedes from Nome made the discoverers a decent offer, which was accepted, and the two then looked after the bones themselves. I never could find out where these Swedes had taken the mammoth, or whether there really had been one at all under the water.

I remember a somewhat similar case which happened

in the easternmost part of Siberia, on the river Anadyr. There two Bosnians, a Dalmatian, and a Montenegrin, were mining gold. All at once these four found, in the earth, a gigantic head, which was, so they said—I did not see it myself—eight yards across. They all said that nobody in the world had ever seen such a huge skeleton. They knew very well how to get rich, and so they set out for Alaska to announce their discovery, and to find somebody who would be interested in it. Then they went back, but the gigantic head had vanished: to the present day no one knows who took it away. The best of it was that along with those men of the Balkans many people went there, undertaking a journey of hundreds of miles, to see that curiosity. The discoverers swore a most horrible death to anyone who had stolen the head. Really in such a forsaken and destitute country nobody would have thought that such a big head could be stolen, and yet it was!

But such failures were comparatively rare. As far as I know anyone who found out anything, and could manage to get it transported to the States, earned good money; often much more than if he had dug out some of the finest gold, worth twenty-three dollars an ounce.

I myself found no opportunity to sell what I knew of, and still know to be there; but I firmly believe that I shall in the end.

V

THE HEROES OF THE FROZEN SEA

HUNTERS, NOT SCIENTISTS

When in the very first year of my sojourn in the Far North I was lucky enough to get into the region of the Frozen Sea, and learn something of that curious, miraculous world which I had never imagined before, even in my strangest dreams, I longed to get to know those horrible and beautiful regions, not only from on board a whaler, or from the icy shores which hemmed in the strip of water between the ice; but to go over those immense plains and gentle slopes, to the mysterious Frozen Sea, intersected as it is by innumerable channels, and cross it backwards and forwards until I knew it thoroughly. I knew that in the North there were tough old settlers who had met with many strange adventures, and yet who never had the courage to go with the daring hunting expeditions which penetrated into those icy deserts, which had brought to nothing so many brave hopes, and been the end of so many lives. But I also knew what blessings this Arctic Ocean had brought to the brave men who went there to find real fortunes in furs, fish, and flesh of seals and walruses. Therefore, when during my stay on the New Siberian Islands a hunting expedition was being arranged to go there, I at once put down my name for it, and was very glad when I was accepted. Later on during my

stay in the North I went on thirteen big expeditions, and only after that could I say that I really knew the North. All my strongly coloured impressions and adventures on the expeditions to Northern Canada and Alaska pale into insignificance beside the memory of those into the mysterious Frozen Sea: into regions where man's foot has seldom trod.

In contrast to the North Arctic Ocean I call that part the Frozen Sea which is eternally covered with ice. It ranges approximately from the seventy-ninth to the eighty-first degree north. Within the Arctic Ocean the New Siberian Islands—my home—reached furthest south. These islands: Figurina, Stolbovoi, Bareshim, Liakhof, Bennett, the de Long Islands; Henriette and Jeanette; and then Thaddeus, Kotelnoi, New Siberia, Valja, Velhobil, Svyatoi, Byelkovskii, Plelkovskii, Bliznoi, Kocnii; and others were at the beginning of my stay in New Siberia inhabited by about two hundred Polar men; besides those, there were, of course, some Eskimo families. Just as these Eskimos, of all the Mongolian tribes, were, on the whole, on the lowest level, I must also admit that the white Polar settlers were hardly the flower of intellect of the white races. Many of them, nay, the majority, could neither read nor write. Therefore our expeditions into the Frozen Sea were not expeditions of scientists trying to reach the North Pole, or to determine the position of the North Magnetic Pole. Oh, no! We did not care for anything of that sort, although to reach high degrees and minutes was considered very courageous, and gave the daring adventurer a tremendous reputation

and great honour. We went on those trips to get a living. In the same way as on the mainland we only went there to hunt, and catch game. We were drawn there by the valuable snow-white furs of the Polar wolverines, wolves, otters, havolins, chocholins, and anulins; the misty fountain of the whale's breath; the shores of ice lakes covered with thousands of seals, walruses, sea-lions, and sea-cows; and the enormous shoals of fish. Only our stomachs and our pockets urged us to those high latitudes, where under the eternally revolving sun we looked for animals frozen to death by Polar storms, we knocked down walruses, placed nets for millions of salmon, and with the aid of the tremendous tides drew captured whales from the narrow channels on to the ice.

Before I begin to arrange properly in my ageing head all our experiences, and describe the most striking features of the Frozen Sea, I must explain how our expeditions were organized. News of a projected trip usually began to spread in the autumn; we often talked it over in the forests of the Rockies, on the Mackenzie, or in Alaska, anywhere where fate happened to have taken us, and brought us together. Those who had decided to take part in the next expedition to the Frozen Sea stayed at home that winter to get properly rested, and to be ready right at the end of March, or in April; and also to be in a position to make themselves useful with dogs, sledges, and previous experience. During the winters which I spent in this way in my cave in New Siberia, I was able to gain at first hand a knowledge of what can happen there in winter, and I

could prepare myself for the coming expedition. Such a winter is really a good test for those who will in future penetrate the icy waste. When the sea froze, and the horizon shook with the ghastly blows of the ice being crushed by the tide, we all crawled into our caves, which trembled as if there was an earthquake.

After some days the frost relaxed a little, and the noise died away, because already the ice was so thick that the tide could not smash through it, and then we could move over the frozen sea. Sometimes then we used to go with dogs and sledges in the direction of Novaya Zemlya looking for Polar bears; but those were quite small expeditions, for because of the intense cold we could not venture far. From one of those trips with the Eskimos I came back with eighteen Polar bears: my greatest hunting achievement. Six of them I kept myself; the rest I gave to the Eskimos. Their flesh is good for dogs. On the way back, however, we had to live through eighty degrees of frost. Fortunately we all had masks for our faces, so that only my toes got a bit frozen.

At that period of the year I sometimes delivered with my dogs goods for my Polar customers, travelling from one island to another; but to travel then was extremely trying, and a good test for the expedition which I should make into the Frozen Sea the following spring.

CELJUSKIN CAPE, SOLITARY ISLAND, AND NOVAYA ZEMLYA

Winter passes: in the middle of March the Polar storm subdues its anger; we are released, we can

emerge from our tombs, and we are busy making preparations. We get ready the dogs, mend sledges, get provisions together, tents, guns, and ammunition. The Eskimos pull out their koburuks; their leather boats which are indispensable for an expedition to the Frozen Sea. Such a koburuk is twenty-five to thirty-five yards long, and it can carry up to twenty tons. In front and at the back it is provided with runners of whales' bones. When the expedition goes over the ice the dogs drag the koburuk empty, and the goods are placed on ordinary sledges; when we have to cross water the koburuk is lowered on to the water, and sledges, men, and dogs sail to the other side. Besides the koburuk every Eskimo has his kayak with him; a small boat for one man; a boat so light that even a weak Eskimo can carry it on his back.

All the preparations are finished, and if spring is favourable and the weather nice, the expedition starts on sledges in April, or at the beginning of May. As to size the expeditions, of course, vary very much: sometimes only ten sledges, sometimes a hundred. If we go on sledges our goal is usually Novaya Zemlya, or Franz Joseph Land. We take only the most necessary provisions, because as soon as the ice has gone a boat follows us with provisions as far as the Frozen Sea, to a spot which we have already fixed upon. Thus we are not unnecessarily exhausted by dragging big loads with us. We first go round the New Siberian Islands, and pick up the members of the expedition; the final starting place is nearly always on Figurina Island, the most northerly one which is inhabited in the New

Siberian Archipelago. From there we go west for Cape Celjuskin, and past Solitary Island still further west to Novaya Zemlya, or the Kara Sea.

I never was actually at Cape Celjuskin, but I saw it from a distance. It is a mass of bare corroded rocks, and desolate places; the point furthest north on the continent of Asia. The Eskimos always landed there for a few hours, and used to return with considerable numbers of animals which had been frozen dead by the Polar storms. North of this cape there are, they say, small islands which are called Czar Nicolas Land, but I was never there; that part of the Arctic Ocean has been very little explored. Similarly they talked of some islands which they said lie north of Solitary Island, but nobody ever found anything there. Solitary Island is a dreary rock, and looks as if nibbled by colossal mice. Nobody lives there: otherwise this island is interesting because near there, in summer, in the channels of water between the ice, there used to be many whales. North of this island there is the most important waterway into the Frozen Sea, which we called the northwest waterway. I shall have a lot to say about it later.

Just like Cape Celjuskin, or Solitary Island, Novaya Zemlya also looks gloomy and inhospitable; but in contrast to them there were, in our time, a few Eskimo families living there, mostly on the western coast. These natives never looked very friendly when we appeared. They were on a very low level; compared with them even our Eskimos in New Siberia were cultured and intelligent. The land is so desolate there

that, by contrast, the bare islands of New Siberia appear to be a perfect paradise. There one sees only sandy rock, snow, and ice; in some years the ice, they say, does not melt even in summer. This kind of thing is rare in New Siberia. Yet near Novaya Zemlya the water is alive with fish as soon as the sea begins to open up when spring approaches. It is much the same in the bays of the Kara Sea.

BEYOND FRANZ JOSEF LAND

Another centre for our expeditions over the ice on sledges was Franz Josef Land; but we nearly always went to those terribly desolate and uninhabited islands by boat, for boats are essential for all big expeditions. Of course, one can't set out in boats for the North in April, for the whole Arctic Ocean is still under ice; there is no sign of water anywhere, and the ice does not break up before May. The sun first melts the snow on top; then the ice begins to turn porous and crack: in places it is terrifically strong, but it is continually corroded by the sun above, and by the water below, until a strong tide smashes it up. Then there are tremendous crashes, but they are not nearly as bad as when the ocean freezes up. Then people on the islands begin to be very lively. Everywhere along the coast of the Arctic Ocean, in Siberia, Alaska, and in Northern Canada, whalers are at anchor waiting for the ice to break, after the high spring tides, when they sail to the commercial harbours to take in large supplies of foodstuffs and equipment for the Polar settlers,

with whom they are in touch, and of whose projected expeditions to the Frozen Sea they had heard already in the autumn.

As soon as the sea is open, and the weather favourable, if the captain is an able man, the boat sails to the edge of the Frozen Sea, between the seventy-ninth and the eightieth degree; if it is smaller, it ventures still further north to an agreed spot, where it unloads the provisions on the ice. But while the big boats are still held up the members of the expedition set out from the New Siberian Islands in small motor-boats, which can get through the narrow channels of the sea, now opening up, right through to the waterways in the eternal ice. These boats, again, carry only the most necessary provisions, because the people know that a big boat will supply all the rest. In these small boats we used to go round the islands to the final station on Figurina, and then we sailed west, or north-west, according to whether our goal was Novaya Zemlya, or Franz Josef Land. Sometimes the different members of an expedition meet on those lonely islands: in the meantime they hunt and fish in the big waterways, where even a big boat with supplies can penetrate; and only after its arrival does the whole party set out for the interior of the icy wilderness. Big ships cannot get far north until in June or July the high spring tides have torn the last remnants of the ice to pieces, and carried it through the Bering Straits.

Later on, when we had our own boats on the New Siberian Islands, we were no longer dependent on those thieves, the whaler captains. Almost without exception

these boats had been bought from other people who had come North to make their fortunes, but who either from bad luck, or from lack of experience, did not catch enough whales, and so ruined themselves completely, and had to sell the boat with everything on board to be able to pay off the mutinous crew, and get back to the States themselves. Altogether they talk too much in America about the millions which are waiting in the North; they have only to be picked up; and so men set out full of high hope, and often end by suicide. It is really sad to see a man who has put all his money and that of his relations into such an enterprise, and here he stands half mad, and doesn't know what to do. Unless he shoots himself he will become a robber, a trader in poisoned liquor, a scoundrel, or blind tiger; in the end he is caught, and found guilty; then he is soaked in paraffin, and burnt alive; and his unfortunate boat gets a new coat of paint, a new name, and serves other masters.

THREE MAIN WATERWAYS

And now at last I must explain what the Frozen Sea is like. I don't know where, and how to begin, it is so difficult to describe a land of which no one has the slightest idea; for at every step there really are phenomena which are not met with anywhere else in the world.

On my very first expedition to the Far North, in a whaler, I had noticed that the expanse of ice, which begins about the seventy-ninth or eighty-first degree,

is divided into a multitude of different parts by the channels of water which penetrate right into the Frozen Sea. This network of channels, some narrow and some wide, just makes it possible for us to penetrate into the interior of the Frozen Sea; they do not change their position towards the north-west of our islands, and year after year we find them in almost exactly the same places, especially the largest of them. The most important of these arteries, ways which cut deep into this icy continent, are three in number, and these three were the ones we made use of most in our expeditions. We called them the north-west, the middle, and the north-east waterway. They are, in fact, something like immense rivers where the sea water flows backwards and forwards, and up and down, with ebb and flood, between shores of ice. Through the north-west waterway, as though all the channels in the Frozen Sea, we had to sail very slowly, about four or five knots, because this wide strip of water is crowded with floes of ice which at every ebb move out towards the open sea, and at every flood tide are held up in the waterway and its side channels, so that there is always a constant movement. Under the term ice floe, you must not, of course, imagine what we mean by that term in Europe; these floes are pieces of ice sometimes up to fifty yards across. Through the constant movement of the sea these pieces are dashed against each other with great noise, and split, so that sharp edges form which are extremely dangerous for koburuks. For when hunters are crossing the channels they try to get as quickly as possible out of the pack-

ice; a koburuk sails fast; its leather bottom touches the ice here and there; at last some floe, sharp as a knife, cuts through the bottom, and all the people in in the koburuk are drowned; for anyone who falls into the icy water of the Arctic Ocean in his Polar dress, has no hope of being saved.

At the beginning the ice floes in the north-west waterway do not matter so much because the water there is over sixty miles wide. It is a pity that I am no good at maps, for I can't show you on the map the direction of those three main passages; I can only describe to you where they begin and where they lead. The north-west waterway begins north-east of Solitary Island, and to get to its outer opening from Figurina Island takes eight or nine days. There there is a big, eternal, immovable iceberg which we call Icecap.

The longer we sail through this wide channel of water, lined on both sides by lofty bergs, or with a low ice barrier, the narrower it becomes, and still narrower, until we must cast anchor, and go onwards over the ice. Gigantic icebergs, some up to thirty miles long, and over a hundred yards high, are most common around the eighty-third degree, and especially near Franz Josef Land. When for the first time I saw such gigantic pieces of ice, towering to such amazing heights, I wondered how they could possibly be formed like that, and how the ice could grow so high. After all, many Polar greenhorns have scratched their heads about it, and even the scientists had to think quite a lot before they hit on the right solution; yet the origin of icebergs is quite simple. When a Polar

storm is raging not one flake of snow is allowed to rest on the earth, or on the ice, between the Pole and the Arctic Circle. The storm licks up everything, from the earth, and from the ice, lifts it up into the air, and throws it about with tremendous fury. This snow is thrown by the storm against the icebergs already formed, and against the floes which have been broken and piles up to a height of many yards as the sea was freezing, and the tide breaking up the sheet of ice. The snow, lifted by the storm, sticks to the ice, and the big lumps of snow are held against the ice face with such force that with the intense cold they freeze together. In spring, when the sun shines both day and night, the snow on the surface of the floe melts and runs, but as it trickles down it freezes again owing to the cold which radiates from the interior of the floe. Thus a crust of ice is formed: one layer above another; the floe grows, and grows, till it changes into an iceberg. Young icebergs are green, older ones dark green, still older ones blue, and in the end dark blue, or quite black. These are, so the scientists assert, millions of years old. The green ones are called icebergs, the black ones glaciers. On the top of the icy mountains various streaks, like knots in wood, are clearly visible, and you can easily see how the layers of ice have been formed. The icebergs grow fastest on the north-east side, because the Polar storms blow mostly from that quarter. Sometimes an iceberg grows on one side to such an extent that its balance is upset, and it slants forward; at other times part of the iceberg falls off with a crash. The surface of these icy mountains is as hard as a rock.

I tried once to scratch the surface with a pickaxe; it was a job!

Besides the icebergs there are round the big waterways in the Frozen Sea mountains of snow, which are a refuge for the wild animals during a storm. It was in the direction of the snow mountains that we headed, because near them there were always many animals which had been caught by a storm, and frozen to death before they could find shelter near the snow mountains.

Beyond the eighty-fifth degree, to the north-west of Franz Josef Land, the waterway changes to a narrow channel, and extends like this to the eighty-sixth degree. Here the blue colour of the sea turns to green, which seems to indicate that it is getting shallow: indeed we often hit on places there where the channel had an icy bottom, and the ice perhaps was fixed to the land below. But that I don't know, we could not waste time with measurements. In water like that, especially near Franz Josef Land, where it is also shallow, submarine floes sometimes stick up from below. We called them ice-cliffs; you can't see them at all, but with their sharp edges they reach almost to the surface, so that if a koburuk runs on to them it is in very great danger. How many disasters have I seen like that, how many of my companions lost their lives in this way, without my being able to give any help!

All along the north-west waterway side channels from right and left open into it, some only ten yards wide, others up to twenty. For our expeditions only

the channels to the right, to the north-east, were of any importance: we never went into the western ones, because there was no game there. Usually we moved towards the north-east; going over the ice between the side channels, and making an angle with the north-west waterway, we went hundreds of miles eastwards, until we got into the zone of another waterway: the middle one.

This middle waterway runs almost parallel with the north-west one, and we could get to its outer opening from Figurina in about two days. It runs north-west; far to the east of the islands of Franz Josef Land, and further north; while from these islands the northwest waterway runs almost due east, and disappears about the eighty-sixth degree. From the middle waterway there are also many cross channels leading right and left: here we went in both directions, through the ones to the left into the region of the north-west waterway, and through the ones to the right into the vast hunting grounds amidst the ice and snow mountains, or over the plains and slopes of ice. Many times we set out on our hunting expeditions by beginning with the north-west waterway, and then going along the cross channels to the middle waterway, and so home, or vice versa. The most important of the cross channels is the so-called big crossing, which meets the middle waterway near Franz Josef Land at 83° 17′ N. If you say to a Polar man eighty-three point seventeen, anybody knows what it means. Whalers also sometimes get as far as this crossing, and there they leave supplies on the ice; it is also a real meeting-place for expeditions, and there

we returned from our hunting trips to the boat which was waiting for us, if in a favourable year it had got so far. We always went back by boat, never on sledges, for we could not wait until the sea froze, because in those high latitudes we should all have died of cold at the beginning of October, and besides that the Polar darkness sets in.

The main cross channels in their turn are again intersected by more channels, which we called side channels. They are also hundreds of miles long. Some are many miles wide, others again are like streets, so that we could cross them easily in the following manner: an Eskimo koburuk was placed on the water in the channel, and from it planks were laid to both banks of ice. When the channels were wider, up to two hundred yards, to get across we used to use sail bridges, or bridges made of fishing nets, while we used koburuks as pontoons. For a width of fifty yards we sometimes tied several sledges one behind the other, and then at high tide when the sea was on a level with the top of the banks of ice, we pushed the sledges to the other side, over the drift-ice which is always floating in a mass through the channels. In this way we could, of course, only cross the channels at high tide, because during the ebb the water level falls fourteen or twenty yards, so that the channels then resemble canyons. If, however, a channel was more than two hundred yards wide, we had to load all the goods and sledges in the koburuks, and cross like that. To unpack and pack again took four or five hours, so that we only used this method when we were absolutely compelled to.

Crossing the channels was not without danger, as I have said before. The koburuks must be very skilfully handled to avoid the ice-floes. Sometimes there is a floe over fifty yards long floating in the channel; then all the hunters in the koburuk stand at the stern so that the bow is lifted out, and sits down on the surface of the floe. The hunters then quickly run from the koburuk to the floe, haul the boat out, and move to the other side, and again lower it on to the water. For this job particularly, very strong nerves are required, as well as skill.

In 1903 a private hunting expedition, led by Captain Kaminerorov, moved through those regions. It went by the north-west waterway and got into the drift-ice, where the koburuk was crushed by a sudden tide. The people wanted to get out as fast as possible, but the bottom of their koburuk was cut through, and twenty-five men were drowned there. The sole remaining member of the party erected on the spot, between the eighty-third and eighty-fourth degree, a monument, a frozen man, a corpse, leaning against an iceberg, holding a gun. He stuck the feet of the body deep into the ice, so that this sad monument of death stood there for many years. There the dead don't rot. Under the feet of the dead Russian he placed a sledge, and underneath that in a box there was a paper written in Russian, explaining how that expedition had met its end. Where the man got to, who survived them all, and put up there his dead comrade, God only knows. Think of the agony and the terror of that lonely man, sitting there on the ice in that dreadful solitude! The

sky is blue; it seems so amazingly near that he could touch it with his hand, if he jumped a little; the world looks like a baby's cradle, because the horizon seems higher than the spot on which he stands; and the sun perpetually circles in the sky, veiled only now and then with light vapour. It is quite calm; a little farther on dead animals are lying about with fur worth a fortune; and yet the devil beckons, and he must die a slow death, and the more horrible for that. Perhaps that man then jumped into the channel himself. I made a note of this catastrophe in the log-book, and sent a message to the Russian Government. The first man to discover this sad monument was another Russian captain called Uralov; after him my Eskimos.

DEATH IS LYING IN WAIT EVERYWHERE

At the highest tide, which usually is at three o'clock at night, the sea flows out from the channels about a a yard above the banks, sometimes even more, and then usually the water freezes. Therefore we always spent the night in the koburuks, on the ice a bit higher up, on small knolls where the highest tide cannot reach. The dogs slept round us on thick canvas. Besides that we always moved about half a mile from the channel, especially on the flat ice plains, which are sometimes entirely under water. Near the chief waterways, near the north-west, for example, or middle way, and at the big intersections we had sometimes to keep as much as twelve miles from the channel, for the tides reach as far as that. The ice is also flooded to a

considerable depth in places where the channels are shallow; as, for instance, near the islands. The big floods play havoc in many places near the north-west waterway, between the eighty-fifth and the eighty-sixth degree. Here there are few icebergs, because they are formed by Polar storms, which are not so terrific in those latitudes: these are at their worst between the eighty-third and the eighty-fifth degree, and there also the icebergs are highest. In those places the water is sometimes ten yards high up to six miles from the channel. Anyone can realize the dreadful dangers that lurk there. The Eskimos and experienced Polar settlers know very well where the water is shallow, and where the smooth surface of ice conceals a recent flood; but it is very dangerous for a foreign expedition which has no leaders with previous experience. A party like this gets to such a place, the ice suddenly begins to crack, they all fall through into the water up to their middles; they become saturated like sponges with icy water, and that usually is their end. Or a foreign expedition may be camped out on the ice far away from the channel, but a high tide carries the sea as far as that; suddenly they all find themselves in the water, and it flows quickly onwards until it extends for miles on all sides. It is a dreadful death. It is neither drowning, nor freezing, nor death by famine; but a little of everything.

Sometimes, of course, the people can save themselves by running to the nearest hillock of snow or ice; but I have heard of expeditions which came back with only half or a third of their party, because inexperienced men led them on to plains exposed to floods caused by

the tides. Others, again, reached the spot when the tide was in; and so escaped death, but had to turn back, and make such detours that they were ruined through loss of time; and either they had to return, and abandon everything, or after weary marches over the awful surface they died one by one of sheer exhaustion. In this way many American Polar explorers lose their lives. They get a long way north, but for guides they only have Canadian, or Alaskan Eskimos, who do not know their bearings very well, and at the first tide they are caught and lost. Therefore it is wiser for those who have had little experience to stay at home, and not to make fools of themselves; for to go to the Frozen Sea is not like going for a stroll.

I have lived in the Polar regions for thirty years; I have taken part in thirteen big expeditions to the Frozen Sea, but I am not ashamed to confess that I should not like to assume the awful responsibility of taking anyone there; for I could never be certain that we should not all perish. And I, I am big and heavy, and if I come to a thin patch the ice cracks at once beneath me, and I often have a feeling that the old man with a scythe is standing just in front of me. Once when I was travelling near the north-west waterway, between the eighty-fifth and eighty-sixth degree, I ran on to a thin patch of ice; the back of my sledge suddenly fell through, and I fell into the water up to my waist. Luckily I stood on firm ice below: I was in no danger of losing my life, because my companions were just behind; but I felt that I was falling right through into the open sea, and I got so terribly

frightened that I lay down afterwards on the sledge, and for an hour I could do absolutely nothing, so upset I was: I trembled, I even vomited as I felt sick from the shock. My God! One sees so many of one's companions die that death does not seem so terrible, but when it stretches out its hand for you—that's something different.

Light people, especially Eskimos, can get over such a spot quite easily; because of that two Eskimos, who have special sticks with points, always used to go in front. They tapped the ice with their sticks and by the sound it gave they knew how thick it was. Then they marked the way, and the rest of the party followed. Similarly, when the expedition came to a channel, which it had to cross, the Eskimos again went first, and looked for places with least drift-ice, so that the koburuks could cross in safety. In this way we kept going farther and farther north, until we were not quite two hundred miles from the North Pole. We had not to waste a single hour, for there are only eighty days in the year when one can travel over the Frozen Sea, and after that the darkness sets in. After the eighty-eighth day, when the nights are continuous, not a single human being sets foot on the Frozen Sea. After all, there is no wood or fuel, and as soon as frost and storm begin death ranges everywhere. And just because our time was so limited we had to account for every single step: that meant that we had to be deliberate, not lose our heads in difficult situations, act on the spur of the moment, and not ponder about too long. And really such situations may arise in dozens

any moment: crossing the channels, finding ticklish places in the treacherous ice; these were only a small fraction of the troubles we had to encounter on the march.

But the worst time was when the party was going along with a channel on one side and an iceberg rising high into the air on the other, so that they had to go for perhaps half a mile on a narrow, slanting bank of ice. Then the Eskimos had to cut notches in the ice with special axes; the dogs, which were usually harnessed in pairs, were placed one behind the other, so that they all stepped in the notches; the runners near the water were bound up with chains; all the men wrapped up their maklaks with coarse ropes, which cling firmly to the ice; they lapped similar thinner strings round the dogs' paws, and then a short, bitter pilgrimage began. Sometimes the ice slanted so much that a sledge began to skid to the side, and then we had to walk beside it away from the water, and support it by pulling towards us. I have often seen the man in front slip, and begin to slide with the sledge, until the whole lot, dogs as well, fell into the water—the man following behind. Perhaps the man managed to keep his head above water for a time while his cries pierced one to the marrow, until his heavy fur dress became soaked with water and dragged him down below. At such a sight the heart stops dead. It was my lot to see dozens and dozens of such accidents, and all I could do was to wave my hand, then turn away, and try to forget about it as quickly as possible. Each man must look after himself; and in the short time available he must shoot

as many animals as he can, so that he himself does not die of hunger.

Many Eskimos, and white men, too, lost their lives because they rushed their team up an ice barrier, not realizing that the other side was the steep bank of a channel: the dogs raced over the barrier, and could not stop, so that by the time we arrived we could only see the water below, and the circles in it, which at once told us what had happened: there was again one comrade less.

These dangerous places are very common near some peculiar formations which are only found in the Frozen Sea, the Ice Lakes. An Ice Lake is a sheet of water in the ice, from one to twelve miles wide; it is usually connected with the network of channels, but the water is not so salty as ordinary sea-water, and sometimes there is no connection at all between the lake and the channels. They are probably formed by the melting of the icebergs with which they are surrounded.

I have been told that they have a bottom of ice, and do not freeze because of warm currents. Even if they do freeze, the ice is never more than one foot thick, so that it gets broken again by the tide, and the water flows out on all sides.

THE ARMY AT AN ICE LAKE

Why did we go over such murderous places as those between a channel on one side and an ice precipice on the other? The answer is simple. After a dreadful shaking we at last emerged past the last ridge of ice,

and there in front of us lay the level surface of an extensive lake, and on its icy shores we saw thousands and thousands of seals, walruses, and other water animals, extending for miles as if a colossal army were lying dead. So they were lying with their heads towards the water, basking in the sun. Among the seals and walruses there were also sea-cows, sea-horses, sea-elephants, sometimes even devil-fish—horrid monsters—the terror of all Polar men. It is a rare sight, which few people on earth have ever been privileged to see. These animals lie motionless, without a stir: sometimes they lie like this for a whole day and night before they go back to the water again. On one side they are protected by an icy precipice fifty to a hundred yards high, so that it is extremely difficult to get at them from behind. Many daring men have tried to scratch their way up along the back of the little ice plateau to surprise the army from behind; but I have often seen them slip on the smooth slanting plain, flash past the bodies of the surprised animals; the water opened, and that was the end. Because of the terrible dangers we only went over such ice slopes if by so doing we could cut down our journey by a few days or a week. Of course, I have known hunters who got over such places a hundred times and always came through safely.

The animals which lie on the ice by the lake are all quiet and friendly together, and one creature does not attack another. Seals and walruses are such peaceful animals that they can be knocked on the head. We knocked them dead with oars, clubs, and iron pipes—anything that came in handy. There is not much

danger connected with this method; the seals were only curious to see how their companions fell under our blows; but still I have seen a friend attacked by a male when he ventured among the walruses: the walrus pierced his thigh with a tusk, and the poor man bled to death on the ice. We often watched Polar bears catching seals and walruses. The bear swims in the water, with only its nose sticking out; it swims very quietly, and at high tide it crawls out stealthily on the side away from the animals' heads; then it walks round behind, and surprises them, because they are unable to see it since their heads are all turned towards the water. It throws itself on them, and boxes them with its paws, so that they fly in all directions. In this way, at one attempt, it kills five, ten, or fifteen: and we, in hiding a little farther away behind an ice-floe, used to roll with laughter.

A young seal up to about three months old makes exquisite food, because up to that time it feeds on its mother's milk; but later when it begins to feed on fish the flesh smells of fish oil. Therefore the Polar men only eat the brains and kidneys of seals and walruses; the rest is just offal which only the Eskimos eat, for their stomachs can stand nasty stuff which would kill a white man. The Eskimos use seal and walrus fat as fuel, food, and even medicine. They send great quantities of it to Japan, and China, where they say that in chemical factories it is worked into the finest medicines. These animals are fattest in spring, when the hunters are just going north; they are then so fat that they are almost nothing else, so well have they fattened on fish.

There are, of course, great quantities of walrus fat, for some walruses are over fourteen feet long. Eskimo women love this fat; but we did not always trouble to catch these animals if we could get sufficient furs; for furs weigh little, and do not burden the sledges very much, while to take back seals and walruses was a difficult business: the koburuks were too full, and fifteen dogs had a hard job to get along quickly with such a big load. Also the danger was greater when we were crossing channels. If we had got enough furs we only took the seals as food for the dogs in winter. Usually we did not skin them on the ice, because we had no time for it: the animal was only cut open, and the intestines thrown away. These were again eaten by seals, walruses, and Polar bears. If we caught sufficient seals and walruses at an early stage on our way north, we did not drag them with us, but cut them to pieces, and stored the flesh in holes in the snow, where we picked it up on our way back. The principal rule on a march is not to take unnecessary baggage; therefore, at every degree of latitude we left supplies of food, and did not take them with us from one degree to another. On our way back we picked up the provisions, and consumed them as we moved to the next dump.

We all helped each other on the way: often we went to meet and assist anyone who was held up, so that we all reached the boundary of the Frozen Sea, or the waterway where the boat was waiting, at the same time. Even on the way back, when the koburuks were quite full, we were not idle; the Eskimos cut up the

seal-skins from which they made different kinds of sails when they got home. Sails made of seal-skin are usually very strong. The special sacks are also made of seal-skin in which a mother carries her child on her back. Eskimos are also experts in making nets, and I often marvelled at the incredible patience with which an Eskimo woman will knit, all her life, nets hundreds and hundreds of yards long, all perfectly strong. I used to think that they were not human at all; I should go mad doing that kind of work.

On the other hand the men, when they get home, melt down the seal fat in special tin kettles which the whalers bring from the States. The kettle is hung on a tripod, they keep on adding fuel and the fat drips pleasantly.

My Eskimos used to cut up the seals always on the spot, because they could not get them on to the sledges whole, they were too heavy. When I saw that we were losing too much time in doing this, I tried to think out how to manage so that we should avoid this long job. At last I got the idea. I took the sledge, passed down its middle a strong rope, which I tied round the walrus: then I unharnessed the dogs from the sledge, tied the rope to a strong ring, harnessed the dogs to the ring, propped the front of the long sledge firmly on my knee, held the back at the walrus, and when I gave the word twenty-five dogs began to pull. The walrus moved slowly up the sledge, and when it began to tip over and was too heavy on my knee, I jumped away, and the sledge fell flat; but most of the walrus was already on it, and it was an easy job to push on the

rest. When I did this trick for the first time the Eskimos danced round me in excitement, for they could not do it themselves, because they were too weak, and under that weight their legs would have broken. Then I called the white men, and again showed them the trick. They stood, and looked, and when at the end I jumped away, and the walrus lay on the slege, they shouted: "Devil take you, you are a champion!" and they went about shouting: "Bismarck! Bismarck!"

After that the white men used this method not only with walruses, but with Polar bears as well.

Sometimes among the seals and walruses there are other animals, similar to walruses but much bigger. We called them gigantic walruses. They are as big as a decent room, and their flesh is quite good. From their skins the bottoms of the strongest koburuks are made. Such an animal contains nearly ten tons of meat and fat. But one cannot knock these animals dead with a club, because they are too huge, and at the same time too quick and dangerous. We usually shot them in the head with dum-dum bullets. If a hunter went among a herd of seals and walruses, and saw a gigantic walrus lying there, he had to be very careful, or the beast would go for him. Several whaler captains told me of very sad encounters with these animals. One party was short of proper ammunition, they had not sufficient rifles, and at last one of the sailors went for one of these animals with a club; but the beast threw itself upon him, and made such a mess of him with its tusks that he gave up the ghost

on the spot. I never saw anything like that myself, so I can't vouch for it with certainty. These gigantic walruses live between the eighty-fourth up to the eighty-seventh degree, usually near the ice lakes. They are dark grey, looking like a black whale, and covered with something like horse-hair. They are not found near Franz Josef Land; it is too far south.

THE NORTH-EAST WATERWAY

To hunt seals, walruses, sea-lions, and other Polar animals we also used to go into the third big waterway, the north-east waterway. While the middle and the north-west ones are rather close together, the north-east waterway is right on the other side of the North Polar Sea. It begins north of Herschel Island, and runs about thirty to sixty miles west of the desolate islands above Northern Canada, until it disappears north of Cape Columbia. Altogether I was not far from this cape four different times. Here our little boat reached 86° 69′ N.: that was the farthest north I ever got in this way during my sojourn in the North. But this is not considered an achievement, for we only count the distance a man gets north over the ice on his own feet, not by boat. Well, in those high latitudes we found such quantities of seals and walruses that we simply did not know what to do with them. There were thousands and thousands lying there: we walked among them and hit them on the head, and laughed heartily at the abundance which God has created.

The regions round the north-east waterway, especi-

ally west of it, are very little explored, if at all. North of Wrangel Island is entirely unknown country, because the ice-fields there are often on the move. We always went past Point Perry, which is an ice cape, not on the mainland at all, but on the eternal ice. Along this waterway we went faster than through the north-west one, along which we used to average about four knots, while through the north-east one to the Cape Columbia we did six or seven, because there is less drift-ice there. But ice-cliffs, submerged icebergs with sharp edges, were also there in places, and we had to be extremely careful while sailing in the koburuks, with which we tried to get into the side channels, and so to the ice lakes. Otherwise we did not venture very far from this waterway. We did not know the ice formations farther west well enough, and towards the east there are islands of sand where we only saw a Polar bear here and there. There are, of course, no people; and we seldom met with Eskimos hunting there. Near Cape Columbia, the north-east waterway is still quite wide. Towards the east, from the end of this waterway, there is a place called the Ice Pass. Through it, they say, there is a way towards Greenland, but I was never there; as hunters we had no time for feats of exploration for which one has to pay with one's life if luck is not standing constantly at one's side.

In those high latitudes we always found plenty of animals killed by Polar storms. After all this was common enough in the latitude of Franz Josef Land, even near Novaya Zemlya, which reaches a good way farther towards the south.

But most often we hunted north of Franz Josef Land, and not far from there. In the channels near this archipelago it is rather dangerous to sail in boats because the sea is shallow. On the southern side of this waste land bare rocks can be seen; but it is difficult to describe the islands accurately, or draw a map, because they are surrounded by ice, and so in many places one can't even approximately say where the land ends and the sea begins. On the northern side, on Rudolf's Land, on the Land of Captain Weyprecht and Payer, there is eternal ice, and the rocks are only visible when the Polar storms have corroded away the ice and snow, and even cut deep into the rocks. One's life is always at stake when sailing round Rudolf's Land, for there at ebb and flood there are dreadful whirlpools. In the spring, when the ice begins to break, before the high spring tides begin, an impenetrable mass of drift-ice floats round these islands.

North of these islands, near the channels, and at the most conspicuous points, we sometimes discovered signs of other expeditions: a sledge with a white man frozen dead, or an Eskimo. I remember that a monument like that was at 85° 63′ N.: the date was marked 1884; at 84° 30′ N. there was another monument, a frozen Eskimo, and the date was 1904. We also put up a monument on one of our expeditions; against a sledge stuck in the ice was propped a seal which faced towards the North Pole.

We sometimes went to those regions from Figu-

rina as early as March or April. It took us about a fortnight, but then we used to spend time on the way picking up animals which we found dead. With a boat, and no stops, we could sail there in a week. I have been many times in the same regions in whaling boats after whales. In these days there are far fewer of these colossal animals than there were half a century ago. Old Polar men often told me how many whales they used to see in those icy waters, while to-day not a tenth of them are left. It is quite true. In the last years of my stay in the North, whaling expeditions were not so numerous, because the captain more frequently lost everything he had.

There are several kinds of whales. The smallest is the white whale: it is about eight yards long. The grey whale is much bigger, and the biggest is the black whale, which is about thirty yards long, and represents a great fortune for a hunter. To-day there are very few sperm whales in the Arctic Ocean. In the thirty years of my stay in the North I heard of only one, which was caught near Nome in Alaska. We mostly went after black whales, for which we used to go into the middle and north-west waterways, to Solitary Island, or near Franz Josef Land, and north of that as far as the eighty-fourth degree. On such expeditions we usually caught two to three whales, once as many as six: that was the greatest number. By this I mean, of course, on our expeditions from the New Siberian Islands. The American or Russian captains with whom I also sailed, caught more whales, but they had to, since their expenses were very much higher, because they

had to come so far, while we, in fact, had everything right under our noses, so that we need not worry so much. We bartered any whales we caught with the Eskimos on the islands for furs.

I knew some captains who in one summer caught fifteen to eighteen whales. Then, of course, not only the captain but the crew as well made a lot of money, because they all got shares in the profits from the oil. But if they only caught two or three, the captain had to make up the rest. Besides whales, on such expeditions we used to catch seals, walruses, sea-cows, sea-dogs, sea-horses, sea-elephants, animals with fur, fish, and anything else we came across, and so we could be very well satisfied with two whales; for, after all, they were only a side-line which we often did not count at all.

Sometimes the Eskimos, while fishing for salmon and other kinds of fish, accidentally catch a whale, which has got into the channel. The whale runs into the strong net, ready for thousands of salmon; it tries to get backwards and forwards, but it can't move anywhere, because the channel is narrow, and it can't turn. The Eskimos then stick it with small harpoons. God Almighty, what a havoc! That is a job! I saw this fun several times. The Eskimos, of course, just forgot about the fish: they had eyes only for the whale, because one whale means prosperity to an Eskimo village for the whole winter. At ebb-tide the whale is completely helpless in the channel; it can't exert its strength, it can't move, because it needs at least twenty-five feet of water to swim in. With only nine feet of water the whale just lies on the ice bottom,

and cannot move. It has to wait for the tide which, of course, for it, never returns. The Eskimos shoot the whale in the head with dum-dum bullets just before the tide returns; they then hit it on the head with iron pipes. From a gun of thirty-two bore, four bullets are sufficient to finish the whale off completely; the charge is half bullet, half glass, with nitro-glycerin inside. Then they wind nets round the dead animal; the tide steadily lifts it until it reaches the edge of the ice-bank, it rises higher still, and then all the Eskimos stand in the water up to their waists, and drag the animal out. At full tide they get it out, and when they have managed to get it up, and the tide recedes again, they have their capture nicely fixed; they then cut it to pieces. I have known the Eskimos capture three whales in one summer by accident in this way.

CATCHING WHALES WITHOUT HARPOONS

When I talk of catching whales I can't help remembering a strange whaler which astonished us all by the queer method it adopted. It was in 1906, or 1907. A boat appeared in Arctic waters which had come from California, and the captain's name was Olson, or Johnson, something like. The North will never forget this whaler. It had motor engines, and on deck there were several strong motor-boats as well; and the most peculiar thing was that the crew had no harpoons. We all wagged our heads when we saw the boat plough the waves near the New Siberian Islands. A few Polar men set out after it to see how the crew proposed to

catch whales without any harpoons. Well, they soon found that the method used was the most effective they had ever seen.

The whole lot on board were negroes from Portuguese colonies. The captain was anxious to get some white men as well; he did not want Eskimos, he said, he only wanted strong men. He even asked me to join, saying that he was certain to catch whales; but I was not very keen. I did not like the company of negroes, and besides, I felt sure that that greenhorn would inevitably go bankrupt. Of course, when I heard later from my friends, who had seen Olson at work, how well he was doing, I had to scratch my head.

Those people first touched at Figurina, where they looked for more men for the crew, but when they could not get anyone they sailed towards the Frozen Sea, north of Solitary Island, and there they waited for the whales. In the first week they caught four, in the next week seven; so in less than a month they had eleven whales; such an incredible number that for the whole of that year we talked of nothing else. They did not stay long in the North, and then they returned to Oakland in California, where, as we heard later, the captain sold the oil, and paid off the crew. They say that even the most inferior members of the crew got quite rich from that expedition. The captain became extremely wealthy; he sold the boat, and settled on a farm in South California. He was only once in the North: the first, and last, time, and he had good luck. He was wise.

What was the secret of his method? He simply

caught the whales in big traps, which were fastened by strong hawsers to two motor-boats. As soon as a whale was in sight, the two motor-boats rushed forward and manœuvred so that it had to swim between them. In this way it swam into the trap, in fact the trap went after the whale, and the sharp rings fixed to it sank into the animal's flesh. The boats then went fast to both sides, the trap shut, and the rings sank deeper. Then the sailors loosened the hawsers because they knew that the whale could soon dive and that it might drag them down into the deep. The whale did dive, but the trap held it in its dreadful clasp; the beast dashed several times up and down and up again; its breath became short, and at last its end came from suffocation. What an eternal pity that at least I did not see that hunt! I cursed myself for my stupidity when my comrades told me of it.

But after the remarkable success of that boat all the whaler captains protested against its method of catching whales. If it were to be used, they said, all the whales would soon be exterminated. They sent a petition to America, so I was told, and to all countries interested in the Arctic Ocean, asking for the method to be prohibited. What came of it I don't know: I only know that from that time nobody ever hunted whales again in that fashion.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL FURS IN THE NORTH

A whale means a fortune, that's true: but to win it is always more or less a matter of luck. I preferred to get

rich more slowly, but safely, and so I set traps for the furry animals, collected those frozen to death by Polar storms, put out poisoned flesh, and took the young ones from holes in the snow. Compared with the splendid furs of the animals in the Frozen Sea the marvellous furs of Canada and Alaska are mere dusters. The three Polar animals which have the finest fur, the havolins, chocholins, and anulins, are all very much alike, and they have a snow-white fur which in barter exchange was worth four to six hundred dollars. Wolves and wolverines are not met with above the eighty-third degree. But they range as far as Franz Josef Land, and their fur in those latitudes is also white and brilliant. Wolves, foxes, and wolverines cross so much with each other that there are many varieties running about.

Sometimes we came across tens and hundreds of animals frozen dead. In the North they do not rot after being caught by a storm; where they fell we came across them, and the fur was quite undamaged. The animal may lie for several years: we didn't waste time with skinning it, we kept that job for when we got home, and then when it had thawed out well we simply skinned it with our hands, but if it was not soft enough we hung it on poles with its legs stretched out, and the head hanging down, like a pig in a butcher's shop. The skin was cut round the legs, and a heavy stone tied on to it, and then it was put in the sun. Through the influence of the sun the meat softened, and the weight slowly pulled the skin off as far as the nose. I have seen on the New Siberian Islands a row of from

two to three thousand wolves, wolverines, and foxes; it looked like the shop of some supreme chief of all the butchers. This method is an invention of the Eskimos: they knew of it, I was told, thousands of years ago. While the sun works the Eskimos are not, of course, idle; they have work enough to do after their return from a hunting trip. They have to store the fish in ice-holes, or dry, clean, and pickle it. While some members of an Eskimo family are away in the Frozen Sea the others do not lie on their backs looking into the blue. Heaven forbid! The women go fishing, either near the New Siberian Islands, where fish are rather scarce, or near Solitary Island, Cape Celjuskin, north of Canada, and near Herschel Island. On such expeditions of women they took men as leaders. As a rule three men from each family go to the Frozen Sea, the others—there may be twenty or thirty—go fishing. If the men return in autumn in time to catch the shoals of fish they also help. In this way they get plenty of provisions for the winter, and live well, but, of course, after their return they still have to put everything in order before winter sets in. They have not only to make the catch, but prepare it, and protect their enormous stores against bad weather, so that they can get something for themselves. And really, I never saw Eskimos suffering from hunger. The only exceptions were when Eskimo families were robbed by blind tigers and bereft of everything: then sometimes whole families died of hunger.

On some rare occasions an Eskimo is lucky enough to catch an Arctic otter. There are several different

kinds of Polar otters. I used to see them in greatest number near Bering Strait; there they are as common as flies near the banks: the shore is steep there, and they are protected by the sea and by the land. This otter is brown, three and a half to four feet long, but its fur has not much value. The fur of the grey otter is more valuable. They used to pay not more than twenty-five dollars for a brown one, while a dark-grey one fetched forty to seventy. I saw dark-grey otters on the islands in the Arctic Ocean; they also lived with us on the New Siberian Islands. They are very wild, and are away as soon as they catch sight of you. The Eskimos don't care for otters, because they were prohibited from sending them to America, for this animal is nearly extinct. I saw most of them in Kamchatka, where hunters knocked them down with sticks, and sent them to Japan, where they got, they said, ten yen apiece.

If otters had not tasty flesh even the white men would not hunt them. The Eskimos only catch them for themselves, and from their skins they make trousers for Eskimo women. They only hunt them, however, when they have time to spare, otherwise it is not worth their while.

Higher up towards the Frozen Sea the colour of the otter begins to change, as is the case with all other animals. They are light grey, and the further north the whiter they become. The Arctic otter, which lives right in the Frozen Sea, is one of the most beautiful animals I have ever seen in my weary life; but it is smaller than the other otters; it is only two feet long. The finest Arctic otters live between the eighty-fourth and eighty-

sixth degree. Their fur is as white as snow, beautifully curled. When one of these is killed and skinned it is a pleasure to look at the small glossy pelt. The Eskimo women comb these furs sometimes for as long as two months. They have two pieces of wood fixed together, like a roof, the skin is stretched and fixed on this framework, and then on both sides they comb out the snow-white hair with a long comb. Of course, before that the fur is thoroughly washed with fine soap powder. When soaked in water it swells considerably, and at least once in a long time an Eskimo woman washes her hands properly.

Sometimes our Eskimos caught two, or even three, Arctic otters in one year; but at other times they did not catch one for five or six years. They would certainly catch plenty of them, if they went out of their way to do so, but they have no time to look for these animals. Such an occasional job is not worth while, for the summer is short, and everybody tries to catch as many animals as he can in the seventy available days, so that he has at least something to put into his mouth at home. Besides it is almost impossible to sell an Arctic otter. They were a very great luxury, and thousands of dollars were paid for them, but now otters are not allowed to be sold in the States. Therefore the lucky man who catches an otter must try to sell it in some underhand way to a dealer, or a bank; and naturally he loses a good deal like this. What troubles my comrades had to find a buyer!

But for all the animals for the luxury trade I must not forget the Polar hare! It lives with us on the New

Siberian Islands, on the tundra, and feeds on lichen. It is low in front, and high at the back; it has a very narrow nose, and its ears hang down. When in danger, and chased by wild animals or dogs, it jumps from one hillock to another with amazing speed. No ordinary dogs can keep pace with it like this, but we had specially-trained dogs, and several ran after the hare, trying to intercept it along the hollows, some following behind it, and others running from the side. The hare finally tires, and falls. When we skinned it we found a dark-blue flesh which smelt of oil. The white Polar settlers keep the hind-quarters, and give the head and shoulders to the dogs. We used the heads as bait for traps, especially for silver foxes. This Arctic hare, like its cousins on the mainland, is a great nomad; it moves from place to place; some seasons it can hardly be found, in others it occurs in great abundance.

SHOALS OF FISH

When one listens to accounts of the great numbers of animals living in such forsaken regions where there is nothing but ice, and snow, one certainly says to oneself: "But, what the devil are those animals doing there? What do they find? What do they eat?"

Rubbish! What could they eat? Fish! Immense shoals of fish attract them to those regions, and take us there after them. For fishermen the Arctic Ocean and the Frozen Sea are a godsend, a storehouse which is always full. I shall never forget the gigantic draughts; nets hundreds of yards long glistening in the sunshine

with the white bellies of hundreds of thousands of little fish! And what kind of fish? Not just anything, not trash, like your dace, and chub, and other tiny tiddlers, for which a fool will hang over a river for days on end, and then drag himself home empty-handed. Oh no!

For in the first place the Royal salmon come to the North. They appear as early as June when the sea is opening up. They say that they come from the Japanese side. They move close together, and swim near the surface. They are always in groups of twenty to a hundred, one group behind the other. As soon as we caught sight of them we put out long nets from one boat to another, then we leaned on our oars, pulled heftily, and dragged the nets to the shore. Sometimes the catch was so great that we could not even haul the nets out, and then other people from the islands had to come to help us. Royal salmon are about eight feet long, and they weight about two hundred pounds. When the fishing was good we caught three to four thousand of them. The flesh is excellent, red as fire; it has almost no bones, only ribs along the backbone, which is two fingers thick. The head is excellent as well.

Three to four days after the Royal salmon have appeared the Silver salmon arrive; much smaller, weighing only about thirty to forty pounds. These fish move in such a multitude that the lower ones literally push the others up out of the water, and we could very nearly walk on these masses of fish. We sometimes caught them in a boat fitted with a great

dredging machine which took up six or eight hundredweight at once. Some of the flesh we ate ourselves, and the rest we dried for the dogs.

The third kind of salmon is the so-called Dog salmon. It is similar to Silver salmon, but its jaws are semi-circular. This rapacious fish has a head a bit darker than Silver salmon, and more pointed. It moves in big shoals in the same way.

After this comes a fish which we call the grayling, something like a pike, but darker, and with a very pointed mouth. It appears after the third week in June. It moves through the channels in the Frozen Sea to very high latitudes, and is found in the ice-lakes, which swarm with millions of these fish. There it is eaten by seals, walruses, and other animals. Then we come to the Arctic herrings. They are white underneath, blue on the back, and about a foot long. Their flesh is a great delicacy. We used to cook them in huge kettles, and also give them to the dogs; not that they were not good enough for us, but simply because we had so many.

Finally the sardines. These little fish crowd together near the shores, in the channels, and in the straits, in such multitudes that even fifty yards from the shore they are so tightly packed together in the water that we could walk on them. We sent them chiefly to Japan. We packed them in barrels: on the bottom we put a layer of ice, four fingers thick, then the sardines, then on top another layer of ice, and nailed the lid down. Only when they reached Japan were they made into conserves in proper factories. There are even several

different kinds of sardines. One kind which is called the booth fish is about twice as big as an ordinary sardine.

Sometimes when we had time to spare we threw a lot of sardines into the water, and waited for the Arctic crabs to appear. They are round; they have big claws in front, and all round they have legs sticking out to a terrific distance. The head is as if sunk into the body, and the eyes peep out viciously between the whiskers. This crab is covered all over with tiny claws with which it catches its prey. We caught it with a small hand harpoon. We waited for it to appear on the surface, then we quickly pierced it, and threw the monster, struggling fiercely, in a curve on to the ice. On its long legs this gigantic crab made at once for the water, but another blow with the harpoon finished it off. The Eskimos particularly are great experts in handling a harpoon. This crab is a great delicacy; its flesh is three or four fingers thick; we used to steam it in a pot. We also found another animal there which may also be a crab. It has a shape like a star, and weighs about forty pounds.

We always caught the greatest amount of fish, particularly salmon, near Franz Josef Land, near Novaya Zemlya, and in the Kara Sea. If the season was good my comrades sometimes caught fish enough to last them three years; but there we used rather a different method. We used to choose a narrow bay and construct a small dam with a sluice which we could lift up and down. When the tide came in the water rushed into the bay, sometimes as high as forty-

five feet: we opened the sluice, and when the water was at its highest we let it fall. When the ebb began and the water receded all the fish brought there by the tide were left behind. We used to haul out thousands and thousands of fish; some men had bears trained for the job, and harnessed them to a small truck. At one single tide up to fifty tons of salmon could be caught. Sometimes, of course, some strange sea beasts were also trapped behind the sluice; so queer that one's head turned from looking at them; prickly fish, monsters with extraordinary heads; it makes one spit to see what misshapen creatures Nature sometimes produces.

In the ice channels, where the tide sometimes rose fifty feet, we caught salmon by hanging nets from one bank to the other. When the tide came in the salmon were carried into the net, and when the water was at its highest the fisherman stood on the icy bank up to his middle in water, untied the net at one side, and hauled it to the opposite bank. As the tide went out the nets were set ready again. On one occasion some of my friends, in one summer, caught two hundred and fifty thousand hundredweights of fish in this way. They dried what they could, the rest they let lie on the ice, and bartered them for furs with some Eskimos, who moved that way. Besides salmon, there were also grayling in the net, and a special kind of trout. Sometimes in the net they caught a fish called halibut, about three yards long, which has a very broad head, and is very tasty; and sometimes they also caught a narwhal or a sword-fish. When caught these fish are very fierce,

and thoroughly undesirable guests, even if they don't attack the boat. They move after shoals of salmon and other fish which they eat. Fishermen declare that these fish accompany whales, and protect them from their foes. After all, as I have explained before, even a whale sometimes gets caught in the nets in the channels.

But in speaking of big fish I must not forget the tiny ones as well, for in the waters of the Arctic Ocean there are also various edible shellfish. When we threw these shells into boiling water they opened. We called them clams, and after the tide had gone out there were whole heaps of them lying on the shore. When these animals catch sight of a man they bury themselves in the mud, so that it is almost impossible to get them out. Once I had great fun; after a clam had buried itself in the sand in front of me I snatched up a spade, which I had ready by me, and dug in after it, as hard as I could, till sweat poured out of me. But I never got anything out, it only made me angry; so I really don't know where these animals hide. Once I looked at a shell with a magnifying glass, and I saw that it had almost a human head: nose, eyes, mouth—everything. As I was looking at it like that it spat a queer kind of scum at me, so I threw it away; my dress was full of the stuff.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE DEVIL-FISH

In case anyone should think that there is no danger when fishing in the North I will tell you of just a

small accident which happened to me on the Rudolf Land, the northern island of Franz Josef Land. I was catching salmon there in a bay with a sluice. The tide went out, and I saw at the bottom of the bay a mass of salmon, so I got them together and with the bears I hauled them out on to the shore. As I was going back for the fish for about the tenth time, and getting them together, I suddenly felt something moving under me. I looked, and to my horror, I discovered that I was standing on a devil-fish.

The devil-fish is the terror of all Polar men; it is a horrid monster, a huge beast, with its head joined to its body without any neck; dark brown body, and white underneath. When lying flat it is over a yard high, but when it stands on its four rows of legs it sticks up to a height of nearly three yards. It looks like a hemisphere, about four yards across. Its head slightly resembles a deformed human face, and that makes the whole appearance still more ghastly. Over the small eyes two ears stick out like those of a bat; I have often heard that when a fisherman gets too near this miscreation it lifts itself up on all its legs, rolls on him with its colossal body, and crushes him to death. This beast never goes far on to the shore; it hides cunningly among the fish, and one doesn't notice it at first glance. That's what happened to me. As soon as I realized the danger, I sprang away up the shore; for a moment I could not collect my wits, so startled I was. Then I began to think what to do. I was afraid to go back among the salmon and get them together. Besides my table for cutting fish I had on the shore the

rest of my equipment. I got a bear, and I led it carefully towards the monster, so that it could see it. The bear stood and growled, while the devil-fish looked at it venomously. In the meantime I ran round behind, over the salmon, and hit the miscreation over the head, so hard that my eyes sparkled from the blow.

"That'll do for you, you bloody beast!" I thought to myself.

But it did not even move, apparently it never felt the blow. So I again crawled up the shore, and wondered what to do, for I did not want to lose the whole of my catch. At last I tapped my forehead. I took some dynamite, which we always had in considerable quantities with us, wrapped it up in a sack, lit the fuse, pushed the sack towards the fish, and ran away. There was a bang, lumps of black spongy flesh flew in all directions, and spattered like ink as they fell. Even then I lost a whole regiment of salmon, but I saved most of them. You can't get at such an animal if you have not nitro-glycerin ammunition: an ordinary shot from a gun does it no harm, it just goes straight through, and the beast keeps on looking at you venomously.

In fact I had damned good luck then. I heard of a fishing expedition in the north-east waterway, in the direction of Cape Columbia, which had a different experience. The party had set off in spring in a sailing boat, and they were fishing in the Far North. It was in 1906. The party divided into several sections, and some found good places with plenty of fish, while others had no luck because they hit on bays where

there were many narwhals, and sword-fish. They knew that an encounter with such fish in an empty bay may result in very serious wounds, and so when they saw these miscreations they gave up, and so made very poor progress. You are not so keen on getting things done when your life is at stake. These big fish had hidden under masses of salmon lying in hollows where there was still some water.

Even then, an encounter with one of these beasts is not so bad as meeting with a devil-fish. I say fish; but in fact it is no fish, it is a gigantic jelly-fish, or something like that. When I was in Europe I looked for its picture in an illustrated book of natural history; I asked many professors, but I could not find it anywhere. With us, however, everybody knows it. In all my life I have seen two of these animals, and I have had enough of them. This devil-fish is in fact the devil himself. It can live in water and on the dry land. It is very tough.

Well then, the men began to fish in the bays till by ill luck they caught two devil-fish behind the sluice. God knows how careless they were when gathering up the salmon! for in that bay eight lost their lives, because they did not realize soon enough that they were dealing with those ghastly monsters. After that dreadful disaster the ones who were left sent messages to all their comrades, asking them to help in getting rid of the beasts. All the fishermen stopped work, and hurried to the bay of death. They decided to catch both fish whole, and put them up on the shore, as a memorial of that misfortune. They closed the sluice,

and with immense care they searched everywhere until they found one devil-fish hiding beneath the salmon. It was about a mile from the shore. They attacked it from all sides: first they went for it with spears and lances, with which they pierced the monster from behind; for it could not move under the salmon so quickly. It kills a man only when it surprises him all of a sudden, when it rises in front of him all unexpected and horrible, so that he becomes stiff with fright, and can't move. But on that occasion the devil-fish paid no attention to the blows: it was quite clear that they did not do it any harm. Then one of the men had a brainwave, and began to hack with all his might at the beast's legs, so that whole rows of them were broken off, and as its legs were shattered it sank until the blows rained on its head, and that was the end of one of them.

With the other, which was not far off, they did not play about so long. They heated an iron bar, and stuck it into the animal's front, and so they weakened it a little bit. After that they went for it, and beat it to death.

With a bear they pulled both monsters to the shore, and there they fixed them up on the ice-wall, with all the eight men who perished in their embrace. This place, they say, lies about fifty miles from Cape Columbia. People in the North used to talk of that misfortune for very many years.

For such encounters we have in the North a choice of different kinds of ammunition. We can easily kill a devil-fish with a tom-bombine, which is a yellow glass

containing nitro-glycerin. This shot tears the animal to pieces.

THE FEAST AFTER THE RETURN

But now enough of sad stories! Our expedition to the Frozen Sea is nearly over, and now our joy begins. Not till the expedition was back home again did we figure out how much it had cost, and how much we had caught; and then we squared up with the captain who had taken us there, and supplied us with provisions, if, of course, we had not gone in our own boat. We sailed back in August, or September, depending on how full our sledges were. Back at home we stored the fish in ice, and let them lie over the winter; usually we did not clean and dry them until the following spring. We used to let the frozen salmon thaw out, then scrape away the scales, take off the skin, and cut the flesh into fillets. We took the bones out, and put the meat in a frying-pan, over a small fire. As the salmon slowly got tender and the fat kept sizzling out, we forgot all about the places where we had fought to get them, and the dreary wastes we had had to endure. We simply drew the marvellous odour into our noses. When about three-parts of the fat had melted out, we took about half a pound of butter, and laid it on the salmon, and then —Jesus Christ and all the Saints in Heaven!—that was a meal! I can't describe it to you, for I simply can't find the words. Ahaa! I ate three salmon all at one go, without any bread at all! Of course, I could

have made bread, but who would waste time with such a fiddling job! I lived one winter entirely on salmon, and it did me mighty good. Once I came from a hunt on which I had sweated all in vain; I unharnessed the dogs, and then all of a sudden such a weakness came over me that I could hardly stand on my feet. I put the dogs in the corridor, so that they could rest, and then I threw myself on the frying-pan, where I had some salmon ready cooked—I only had to warm them —and I pushed one salmon after another down my throat. I just swallowed them. I made coffee as well, and moistened that heavenly manna until I filled out like a trumpeter. Then I looked to see how much was left: two, three pieces out of a huge pan full! I had eaten several pounds of it! It is a light fish, and it never made me ill.

Thus I feasted all the winter through. Then I sorted out in my head everything that had happened on the last trip, and if there was anything particularly remarkable I entered it in my log-book, so that I was able to report to the representatives of the various countries, which are interested in the North, when they appeared in their warships. Then having nothing else to do I read my old notes, of which I have boxes full in my cave, and so I had the whole of my life in the North spread out before me, as if on the palm of my hand. And just because I read my log-books through so many times during the dreadful winter days, when the storm was shrieking outside, and my cave trembling, I can tell you of the big and famous hunting expeditions into the Frozen Sea as if I now

held in my hand those old papers which cheered me through the long and dismal days so many times. How many experiences, how much suffering, and how much pleasure is recorded in those log-books, in the accounts of big expeditions led by famous hunters who are now most of them dead!

But here I shall wake them to life again.

EXPEDITIONS OF FAMOUS CAPTAINS

There were very few people in the North who got to very high latitudes in the very first year of their stay in the region of the Arctic Ocean. I was one of them. Then, of course, it was only as an ordinary and very inferior seaman. But later, when the famous northern captains took me with them on hunting expeditions to the Frozen Sea, I was no longer an inferior, and besides my job I could pay close attention to everything going on around me, so that one day I could give an account of my experiences. Of the expeditions which I am now going to describe, either I was a member myself, or their leaders gave me a detailed account at first hand. These may appear strange and sometimes incredible, but I believe the stories to be really true, of meteors which were found, of amazing eclipses of the sun, of the terrible inversion of the world, of the heroism of the Eskimo hunters, and finally of the discovery of an unknown Eskimo tribe, of which nobody had ever heard until they were seen by the members of the famous expedition of Captain Tamarak. They are stories of attempts to find new hunting places,

of the search for minerals on the corroded hills of Franz Josef Land, or in the mysterious caves.

LAAP

Here lies before me a chit of paper on which I wrote down to help my memory: The whaler captain and Eskimo hunter Laap reports for the year 1905——

And at once I know everything. If you woke me in the middle of the night, and asked me to tell you about any of the most important hunting expeditions to the Frozen Sea, I could start at once. How many times have I already told these stories in all the corners of the earth! And how many times have I listened to them myself!

The expedition led by Captain Laap set out for the North from Bareshim Island in April. On Figurina they picked up more members of the party. They were not many, only about thirteen, of which two were white men, and the rest were natives. Well, a small expedition. I did not go with them myself, but towards the end of that summer I went to the cross-channel, 83° 17′ N., to take them home. They had seven sledges to each of which they had fifteen dogs. They went over the ice, past Cape Celjuskin, Solitary Island, Novaya Zemlya, and farther north along the north-west waterway to Franz Josef Land. This they reached at the end of May. On their march farther north they stopped at the big cross-channel, which is very important for checking bearings. It runs from west to north for a distance of hundreds, or it may be thousands, of

miles. Having reached the channel, which was there ten miles wide, Laap waited for the tide, so that he could make a quick crossing to the other side. They passed the eighty-fourth degree, and headed still farther north. At 85° 6′ they stopped and began to hunt, and look for animals killed by Polar storms. They did not find much, because other expeditions had been there, and picked up everything, the year before, and Laap's expedition had to be content with game which had been killed over the last winter. They went farther north, and passed the eighty-sixth degree, where on a vast ice plain they divided into three groups. One went north, the second west, the third east. The group which went still farther north reached a spot 86° 63′ N. All the three groups then made big catches of fish in the channels, but there were no seals, or walruses. There was there an immense ice plain, but it was too far to the right from the north-west waterway, and there were no ice-lakes, or wide channels. On the way back they found on the ice a meteor of which about one-third seemed normal, and two-thirds appeared to have been burned and melted.

It was as late as the beginning of June when we set off from New Siberia, under the leadership of the Eskimo captain Ivanov, after this expedition. At the cross-channel we began to catch seals, walruses, and fish; we also picked up dead animals and set poison for others. This time we did not want to go far north, we only got to 83° 23′, where there is another smaller channel. We took Laap's party with us after we had met. We then made for Crown Prince Rudolf Land,

and Weyprecht Land, where we looked for minerals; and then we returned home.

MACDONALD, YANKEE, OERELL, MACIVOR

I remember another smaller expedition led by Captain MacDonald, my comrade and lenient creditor. This expedition started on sledges from Figurina in March 1903, to catch walruses, seals, fish, and animals with valuable fur. I was not a member of this party either. When Captain MacDonald dictated his report to me for the log-book he complained of the troubles they had had on the way, because they had to keep on making immense detours round the open sea which seemed to be everywhere in the ice. So they did not even manage to reach Novaya Zemlya where they wanted to catch fish in the bays. They only got to within about a hundred and fifty miles of it, towards the north-east. Later on, even near Franz Josef Land, they still had to make big detours. Few of the men on the expedition had had proper experience; they were mostly Eskimos who had seldom been in those regions, and so they did not know their bearings very well. MacDonald did not even get very far north, only 85° 37′; nor had he much luck on the hunt, so that the expedition did not pay at all. Of course, with MacDonald it did not matter, he was stuffed with money, a dollar millionaire. On the way back on the eighty-fifth degree, near the north-west waterway, he found a meteor twelve feet across, and twenty-seven feet long, so he said, half dross, half pure brass.

Also our good friend, our eternally tipsy, good-natured Captain Yankee, the king of all muddlers, but at the same time knowing his North exceedingly well, undertook in April 1907 an expedition from Henrietta Island. Only five Eskimo families went with him, and they wanted to fish round Franz Josef Land. It was a good year, and the party caught unheard of quantities of seals, but few walruses. Captain Yankee swore that if he had only been equipped for catching whales he could have caught as many as five, or even seven, for he had seen so many. But unfortunately he had no equipment for the job, and so he could only watch them spouting water right under his nose, and tear his hair at the fortune which he had to let go. They moved south of the big cross-channel, over the ice plain, to the middle waterway, but they did not get to the latitude of the big cross-channel itself, because they wanted to catch as many fish as they could while the shoals were there. They only got, therefore, to 83° 7′ N., but their total catch was worth a hundred thousand dollars.

At the end of March 1909 the expedition of the Australian Captain Oerell set out north. He had been living next to me in New Siberia for years. His party got into the regions round the middle waterway, where, between the eighty-fifth and the eighty-sixth degree, they found two burnt meteors. On the eighty-sixth degree they came across vast ice lakes on the shores of which thousands of seals and walruses were lying. They knocked them dead with clubs. A little farther from the water they stored their bag in holes in the

snow, and then they searched farther north for dead animals, which they also found in great quantity, for wolverines, havolins, anulins, and chocholins manage to get as far north as that over the frozen sea. Not far from there they found high snow mountains running for a great distance, and there the young animals in the holes often have the finest fur, but they arrived too late, the young ones had already gone. On July 4th, Oerell got farthest north, 86° 79′ N. Few people in the world have been in those latitudes. In spite of that, of course, Oerell did not wish to be called a Polar explorer. From there he made south-east almost as far as the cross-channel. Then the expedition divided, and one party returned to pick up the seals and walruses which they had left on the way north. The whole lot was then loaded into koburuks, and the party moved to the cross-road Uchuturujuk-Maud, where the great cross-channel meets the north-west waterway. Here they camped, and waited for our boat to take them home to the New Siberian Islands.

Among the smaller expeditions which come into my mind the expedition of Chief McIvor is worth mentioning. He set out in April 1908 from the Figurina over the ice to Franz Josef Land, and there he hunted and waited till June for the coming of the high spring tides. After that he moved along the middle waterway to the cross-channel, to eighty-three point seventeen, sailed across it, and kept on towards the north-west. On the way the expedition found a large number of dead animals, and then, between the eighty-third and the eighty-fourth degree, they came

across a terrific number of seals and walruses, and a few sea-elephants as well, near the ice-lakes. They only killed the seals and walruses, because they were not equipped for catching sea-elephants. Finally they crossed the eighty-fourth degree, and there they caught fish in the channels. Salmon move in millions right up to those latitudes. All the six koburuks were by now loaded to the brim. They still looked for dead animals, but found very few, because they had not yet reached a high latitude. At most they only got to 84° 12′ N.

To meet these expeditions I sometimes went from New Siberia in a motor-boat, the *Seven Sisters*, or with the big boat, *Laura*, which was also called *Seven Sisters* before we bought her from her bankrupt captain. But usually we went with the ninety-ton motor-boat, *North Pole*, which was most suitable for that kind of job. This boat, which belonged to me and a few of my comrades, was, it is true, only one hundred and forty-five horse power, but it served us excellently. She was always in the North. She did about nine knots; of course, only in the places where the water ways were free from ice, otherwise we went very slowly. We bought the boat at Oakland in California. We always sailed to the big cross-channel, and there we hunted or fished and waited for the expedition to appear on the north bank. We loaded their bag, dogs, sledges, and koburuks on to the boat, and on the way home I always let them tell me in full detail what the expedition had been like, what had happened, what the bag had been; in short, everything.

CAPTAIN EMERSON GOES MAD AFTER SEA-ELEPHANTS

More interesting than these small expeditions was that of the whaler captain, and famous hunter, Emerson, a Norwegian, my best friend, and one with whom I traded for eighteen years. Emerson owned several fox farms in Alaska. When we had got to know each other I told him in confidence that I had a trade connection with a big fur company in St. Louis, which paid handsomely, and sent in exchange for furs excellent goods fabulously cheap. He then went into partnership with me, and so we travelled together into all the damnable and God-forsaken holes of the North, and everywhere among the Eskimos we bartered goods for furs, which we then sent to St. Louis. Emerson was a fine, sprightly chap, and his name had a good sound in the North. But he had one small weakness. As soon as he got an idea into his head it got hold of him to such an extent that one could not dissuade him from the silliest tomfooleries. A good example of his hot-headedness was his adventure with sea-elephants.

Like nearly all other expeditions of which I have spoken this one began on Figurina, and from there they went on sledges towards the middle waterway, which was, of course, still frozen. At the very beginning of the ice boundary they were kept back by severe storms, but as soon as the weather improved they hurried north as far as the eighty-third degree. There the expedition divided into three parts. The first group went north-west, the second due north, and the third south-west towards Franz Josef Land. The aim of the

expedition was to find new, big, and rich hunting places; ice-lakes where there are many seals and walruses; or snow mountains near which there might be animals with valuable fur. They all agreed to meet at the intersection of the big cross-channel and the middle waterway. Emerson himself led the group which went due north.

Even before they reached the big channel, between the eightieth and the eighty-third degree, they found plenty of dead animals, which they left not far from the channel, so that they could pick them up on the way back. They crossed the channel, and without any difficulties they got as far as the eighty-fifth degree. From the appearance of the ice they thought that they were getting near to the ice-lakes. And very soon afterwards, the Eskimo in front flew with his team up the sloping face of the ice barrier, and waving his hands he called out:

"Mak me tuch a kut aiaa su taagoo machaa uchur uguruk kaach aiaa koha!—The whole country here is full of seals and walruses!"

In a very short time Emerson saw in front of him the surface of an ice-lake and the shores covered with an immense number of animals, but it was not seals or walruses which suddenly made Emerson hold his breath, and pointing with his hand he whispered:

"There! There!"

For among the animals, gigantic sea-elephants were lying, of which Polar men meet very few, even in the Frozen Sea. The sea-elephant, the Polar giant, has a body something like a walrus, but it is much bigger,

and it has no tusk at all. The elephants at which Emerson was then looking were two in number; they were over thirty feet long, and he estimated their weight at two and a half tons.

Why all the excitement? That old hunter knew very well that an elephant would only give him about as much flesh, oil, and skin as two walruses. Well, there were hundreds of walruses lying there. He was not looking at anything very valuable! That's quite true, but he had something else in mind. He had heard the Eskimos tell stories of how some tribes caught this huge animal in nets; of course, nets much stronger than fish nets, and so could get them alive. Emerson had wondered for a long time how he could capture a live sea-elephant, and sell it to a zoological garden; he knew that he would get a nice sum of money if he did so. Then, of course, he was not so rash as to think of catching an elephant on the spot; he knew that their nets were not strong enough; but he wanted to see how the Eskimos catch the animal, and he wanted to make sure that his companions were telling the truth when they declared that they had taken part in a hunt like that. That old Polar man, who had spent forty years in the North in a continual struggle with Nature, made up his mind to get some fun out of it for himself and for his companions, and so he told them to take the nets, and see if they could catch one of the giants at any rate.

"But the nets will get broken!" the Eskimos objected.

"All right, the nets will get broken," said Emerson.

"I will pay you compensation for them. I will give you new ones, much finer than those you have now. I want to see how you do the job. Show me."

Now you should have seen those Eskimos! They jumped round Emerson in excitement, and at once they began on the job. They pulled out the net; they fastened one side to the ice, and to the other they tied a big rope. When they had spread the net out on the ice, between the sea-elephants and the lake, they began to move through the seals and walruses towards the huge monsters which were quietly basking there. They began to shout, yell, whistle, and jump, enough to make you run away in fright. While doing this they tried to drive the elephants towards the water, to make them walk over the net.

But these animals were not very anxious to leave their familiar little spot. They would not budge, they only began to shake their heads about threateningly in the direction of the Eskimos. The Eskimos, of course, were not afraid, for a sea-elephant like that is not dangerous; so they began to poke them with oars until one at last became bored, got up slowly, looked all round, and walked lazily towards the water. The Eskimos were already standing by the net, and as soon as the elephant got near the centre, they deftly threw the other half over its back, and then they had it. But the dear old elephant began to throw itself about with such fury that the net began to break; one half remained on the ice, and with the other wrapped round its head the giant took the water. So it began to swim, trying to get rid of the net, but it could not manage it.

Emerson quickly told the Eskimos to cut the net so as at least to save the half on the ice. The Eskimos did as they were told, but by now the elephant, swimming strongly, began to be really angry. Emerson told me that he had seldom heard such roaring laughter as he heard then on the ice. The poor creature looked like some old granny in a big bonnet, and it amused Emerson so much that he promised a very big reward to anyone who could get the net off again; but none of the Eskimos dare attempt the feat, and the beast kept on swimming here and there round the lake, with the cap on its head. Although Emerson again promised the Eskimos that he would compensate them handsomely for the lost net, they kept on wondering how to get it back again, and so they stayed by the lake a long time; but at last they saw that it was hopeless to try to get the net, because the elephant was quite mad, and rolled through the water with great speed, and in a tremendous rage, never stopping for a moment. So in the end they relieved their feelings on the poor seals and walruses lying there, which had been looking on with great curiosity at the strange happenings taking place before their eyes. They went for them with oars, and knocked them on the head until they had got together a nice pile.

But Emerson still stood there with an eager expression on his face. He had got a plan in his head, an idea for the next year. He had found out that the Eskimos really spoke the truth about being able to catch a sea-elephant, if only they had proper strong nets. Very well, he would get nets for them,

and they would go there again the following year.

He gave orders for them to march north: they would only go on for a few hours, and would hunt and collect dead animals on the way; then in a short time they would come back again; for the elephant would surely quieten down soon, and crawl out on the shore, where they would be able to get the net off its head. So they moved away for several hours towards the north, and they all wondered what the elephant would be doing, and whether it was alive, or dead. They could not bear to be away for a whole day; and back they all rushed to the lake. The beast was not in the lake at all, and they could not see it among the other animals on the bank either, so they searched in all directions, in the water, and on the ice; there was nothing anywhere. At last when they had run round the ice cliffs, and got among the ice rocks, they found the lost net near a sharp ice edge. From the marks it was clear that the elephant had gone there, and rubbed its head against the edge until the net fell off. They took the net, and with it they moved south, to the channel, and so home.

Five or six years passed. The year after that expedition Emerson did not go north, he was hunting on the Mackenzie, and in Alaska. As time went on he forgot about his plan for catching sea-elephants, and he began to think that it would not be worth the trouble to set out for the Frozen Sea merely to catch these animals.

But six years afterwards a very unusual expedition went past the New Siberian Islands. It was Hagenbeck's boat; these people were going to the Frozen

Sea, where they wanted to catch sea-elephants for the Zoological Gardens in Hamburg. Besides the best sailors there were on the boat the best trainers of animals as well. We talked with them; they chatted in a very friendly manner with us, and talked about the millions that such an expedition cost. I said to myself: "Why the devil isn't Emerson here? He would certainly go with them!" Emerson happened to be on Figurina at the time, and was due to arrive any moment.

A few days after Hagenbeck's boat had gone Emerson turned up on the island, and at once I told him what kind of people had been there. Then Emerson completely lost his head: he did not hesitate a moment: very quickly he got provisions ready, and a few Eskimos, jumped on board his boat, and set off after them. It was two months later before he returned, and then in great excitement he told me about everything he had seen.

He said that the Hagenbeck people had got as far as the eighty-fourth degree, and there they began to look for sea-elephants. Emerson pretended that he was hunting seals, and collecting dead animals. He was in fact actually doing that, for nobody would leave gold lying on the ground, that's common sense; but he always kept near them.

On the eighty-fourth degree they could not find a single elephant, so they held a long conference, and then they moved farther north-east, and so got near the lakes where Emerson had found his two elephants years before. He again pretended that he was not

interested in their expedition, but he watched from a distance through a telescope how they set about the job, for there the German hunters had discovered two big elephants. They pulled out some strong nets, and began to go for the animals exactly in the same way as Emerson's Eskimos had done. They soon caught the first, and they bound it fast by passing strong rings through the meshes of the net. Now the elephant was as if in a cage; and they dragged it along on a special sledge which was obviously built for the purpose. Some members of the party then went along with the capture on the sledge, and with one big koburuk, making for the direction of the boat which was waiting far towards the south. The other members of the expedition stayed behind trying to catch the other elephant. For three days they tried and tried before at last they managed to get it, and for the whole of that time the stupid Emerson just stood there and gaped. When they had got the other animal as well they disappeared towards the south.

Their boat again called at the New Siberian Islands. The men told dismal stories of the trouble they had had with the sea-elephants. They were, they said, real princesses among all the other creatures: squeamish, finicky, nothing suited their taste. They had on the boat a big tank for them, but they always had to pour cold sea-water on them, and push carps into their mouths, of which they had to have an enormous supply on board. They said that sea-elephants only eat one kind of fish, of which the taste is similar to that of a carp. So by force they were trying to get the beasts accustomed to

that kind of food. They had to watch them constantly to prevent them from knocking themselves to death in the tank. They fed them only twice a day. They all said that they would not bet a broken penny that the beasts would not expire somewhere near Hamburg, so that all the millions would have been spent in vain. I don't know how they got on afterwards. I inquired after the animals in Hamburg myself many years later, but the keepers could not remember them any more. They only told me that once they had had two of them, but only for a short time, and then they sold them to a zoological garden in the States.

After Emerson had seen what a value these animals had, he would not listen to reason any longer, nothing could keep him back; he had a tank made on his whaler, and a year later he set out with a smaller expedition to hunt elephants himself. He came back at the end of August. The moment he landed he dashed into my cave and shouted:

"Now I am really a rich man, old boy, I caught six of them!"

It was a premature joy. Emerson negotiated with many agencies, announced everywhere what a capture he had made, but nobody cared for sea-elephants, just because they are so delicate. From several zoological gardens he got answers back that sea-elephants usually died before they had paid for the cost of their capture and transport. When at last two of his elephants died, perhaps because he had run short of carp, and had begun to stuff them with grayling, with a heavy heart he decided to kill the rest, and make some use at any

rate of their flesh, fat, and skin. That was a bitter disappointment for him; we all secretly laughed, but, of course, we also pitied him. This was not so much because his madness had cost him such dreadful sums of money, for he could easily afford to lose ten times more, but we saw our friend's pain and anger. I was present when Emerson's men were cutting the elephants to pieces. They were all fat, so well had Emerson fed them. One of them had a layer of fat, I am telling no lies, three-quarters of a yard thick. Emerson sold the fat in the Eskimo reservations on the New Siberian Islands, and in exchange he got many beautiful furs.

Not long after his adventure with the sea-elephants he settled in Northern Canada, among the local Indians, and began again as a trader there. On that journey I paid him everything I owed him, and since then I have heard nothing more of him, and I don't know whether he is still alive, or whether he is dead. He was my best friend, and if we ever meet again in this world we shall shake hands, and start a long yarn about our adventures.

VI

THE FAMOUS EXPEDITION OF CAPTAIN IVANOV

FIFTY-SIX NATIONS MEET

A few years before 1914 people began to say in the North that attempts should be made to discover new places in the Frozen Sea which would widen the choice of hunting grounds. The subject was discussed more seriously year by year, until at last in the autumn of 1913 we decided among ourselves to make a monster expedition into the Frozen Sea. It was to be an expedition such as had never before set out from the New Siberian Islands. We decided to put at its head the most prominent men of the North, and on the suggestion of Captain Tamarak, the Indian hero, the expedition was to divide into four groups when it reached the Far North. One group would act as base, whose position all the others should know, and be able to fall back on in case they ran out of supplies, or anything unforeseen happened; while the other groups would explore the country, look for good hunting places, and practicable routes, and, of course, do some hunting as well on the way.

As soon as it became known beyond the Arctic circle that in May 1914 an expedition would set out from the New Siberian Islands, of unusual size, led by the most famous experts, and the best-known Polar cap-

tains, and accompanied by the bravest Eskimos, there was no other topic of conversation on the islands. When at last we met in May in New Siberia, it was a real Babel. We figured out that among us the different members talked fifty-six different languages and dialects. As the news spread that we were just ready to start everyone went crazy, and tried to join with sledges, dogs, provisions, and koburuks. On some islands they even fought to be allowed to go with us, and those who showed themselves to be efficient and more likely to be an asset to the expedition than a nuisance were envied by all the others who had been rejected. Captain Ivanov was appointed leader of the whole expedition, while the leaders of the different groups were: Ivanov, the Indian captain Tamarak, and the Eskimo captains Ak-Mook, and Yak-Sook-Ojaak. These were famous names, any of them raised enthusiasm wherever it was known that such indomitable leaders, and men with such experience of the eternal ice, would lead the expedition. Among Captain Tamarak's group there were also his son Ochut, and other prominent Indians, and Eskimos. Everybody, however, envied Ak-Mook, because for his group the Figurina Eskimo Na Anko and his friends had sent in their names. He was a young civilized hero, brave, almost foolhardy, and his comrades Kutjook, Atiak Took, Makluk, Tukuut, Achaatj, and Kagiaan scorned death, and laughed at it wherever they went.

The final meeting was as usual on Figurina, where the boat *Seven Sisters* was lying at anchor, ready to take us to the zone of eternal ice. The two parties led

by Captain Tamarak and Ak-Mook set out first over the ice to Figurina to pick up Na Anko and his friends. We set out a bit later on sledges by way of the islands Valja, and Velhobil. You will understand that the sledges were very heavily laden, for we had to have food enough with us for the whole summer. The Eskimos who were not going with us lent us sledges and dogs, and the white Polar men who were going to stay at home also helped us out. On Figurina we waited for the ice, which was already cracking, to break up, and for the high spring tides to come, which with a great rumble would break up the ice, and carry away the floes, so that we could go on by boat.

On June 3rd we at last heard the roaring of the tide towards the south-east, and the ice blocks began to lift. For two days the tide smashed up with its tremendous power the last remnants of the ice cover, and on June 5th the sea was clear enough for us to sail out. On our boat there were eighty-five white Polar settlers, one hundred and thirty Eskimos and Indians, and one thousand five hundred dogs. We had sixty koburuks, and a hundred sledges, while each Eskimo had his own kayak as well.

THE DEPARTURE

We did not sail straight away north; we first headed west for Novaya Zemlya, where we took in from the natives more supplies of dried fish for the dogs. That year the sea was unusually smooth.

From Novaya Zemlya we went to Franz Josef Land,

and along the islands towards the north-west as far as 82° 87′ N. Here we got out, unloaded the supplies from the boat on to the sledges, and harnessed the dogs to the sledges and koburuks. At high tide we hauled the boat up a little on to the ice, and tied her up thoroughly, and then farewell and forward!

A very long procession made for the big cross-channel at 83° 17′ N. Here we unloaded everything from the sledges and filled the koburuks, got in ourselves, and very cautiously, at high tide, we crossed to the other side of the channel, which was there about ten miles wide. At that time there were not many big ice-floes about, for the big spring tides had carried most of them away, and the small floes which were still floating there did not do any harm to our boats. In a few hours we landed on the northern side of the channel, moved everything from the koburuks to sledges, and set out for the north, and the other smaller cross-channel at 83° 23′ N.

We got over this channel safely as well. The time to separate into groups had now arrived: the last discussions took place; the four parties stood there ready; every man was expected to do his utmost, and all agreed to report to the rendezvous at 85° 63′ N., where captain Ivanov's group would be waiting.

It was twenty-five minutes past twelve when Yak-Sook-Ojaak gave a curt word of command. His party of twenty-eight men, among whom were the famous white Polar settlers: Oerrel, my friend Emerson, Captain Laap, MacIvor, and MacDonald, moved off at a good pace towards the east.

A wave of the hand, and Ak-Mook was also ready to start. In his group there were thirty-five men. Our expectations were centred on this party, for everyone knew of the rivalry between Captain Ak-Mook and Na Anko, the hunter, who in courage and daring was far superior to any others. He was not a captain, or a quartermaster; he knew nothing about managing a boat; he was just an ordinary man, an ugly, uncomely chap with a big mouth; but if anyone started to talk about his achievements, everyone's hair stood on end. These two, Ak-Mook and Na Anko, always wanted to go everywhere together, not for friendship's sake, but just to show to all the North who knew most. We were all, therefore, very curious to see who would be the hero of this big group, whose task it was to get as far north as possible. Ak-Mook took a glance at his party, and started. It was forty-five minutes past twelve.

Ten minutes later Tamarak's party said good-bye to us. There were twenty-eight men in it, with sledges, koburuks and dogs; one hero standing shoulder to shoulder with another. Tamarak was, in fact, one of the really great leaders. I had known him for many years. His expedition was entrusted with the most dangerous task, which was to investigate the regions towards the west. There the country was extremely difficult, and they carried their lives in their hands. This expedition was, however, provided with the best equipment, in case it should find itself in dangerous snow-fields, where the damp snow has been a grave for many an experienced hunter.

They disappeared towards the west; and then we were left alone, the group led by Captain Ivanov, of which I was also a member. We moved farther towards the north-west until we found ourselves on the ice-fields at 85° 63′ N. There there were no ice mountains, only small hillocks sticking up from a vast plain. We made a big pile of sledges there, visible a long way off, because this spot was to be the rendezvous. We surveyed the regions round about, and kept on hunting until the beginning of August when we were all due to meet again.

At last one day in August we saw on the horizon men, dogs, and koburuks; and a few moments later we recognized Yak-Sook-Ojaak's party coming home. We ran to meet it, and at once we asked what news they had, how they had fared, and whether they had found any new hunting places. They reached a spot 86° 89′ N., in a direction north-east from their starting-point. Very far north they came across several ice-lakes where there were immense numbers of seals. So the object of the expedition had been attained; new big hunting grounds had been discovered, and Yak-Sook-Ojaak could feel satisfied with his work.

As we were sitting on the sledges, and talking with the members of the party which had just returned, more specks appeared towards the west.

Tamarak's expedition was coming, too!

We looked through telescopes. Oh yes, it was Tamarak. They ran as if out of their minds. Here they were. The Eskimos and Indians jumped round us in excitement, and chattered, each one harder than

the rest. We also caught sight of the taciturn Tamarak, and his son Ochut, with bright and excited faces: certainly something unexpected must have happened!

"Hallo, boys, what is it?"

How can I forget that white, cold night when we sat round in a circle on the ice, and Captain Tamarak talked of his amazing adventure, interrupted by the eager exclamations of his comrades, and his son Ochut! Who would have believed his story, if it had not just been Tamarak, a man who never told a lie? Here I will try to tell the story as I heard it from Tamarak himself and from the members of his party. It is now fifteen years ago, but even to-day the North is full of that story. Perhaps I ought to say that sometimes I wonder myself whether it is really true, and I suspect that they may have invented it as a cloak for the poor success of Tamarak's section; but I never dare express my doubts aloud, because in the North they all believed implicitly in Tamarak, and a sceptic might have lost his life if he had not held his tongue.

TAMARAK'S EXPEDITION

After leaving us Tamarak made straight for the west. He wanted to cross the north-west waterway at this latitude, although he did not know his bearings on the west side. The greatest danger which threatened him, and of which he was already aware, were the snow plains, where the melting snow might make any further progress quite impossible. But against this trouble Tamarak was well provided: he had special

baskets on the sledges which could be slipped under them, so that they would not fall through even the softest and most slushy snow. These baskets were as long as a sledge, but underneath they had special iron runners, about eight inches wide, fixed six inches below the bottom. These baskets were made of good oak wicker, and the bottom was strong enough to bear the heaviest loads. Tamarak had eleven sledges, with fifteen dogs to each. He also had two big koburuks, twenty-eight yards long. That was all he needed.

He soon got to the north-west waterway, which at that spot was over sixty miles wide. It took a whole day and a night to get to the other side, but the crossing was not dangerous because the spring tides had carried the ice-floes away, the rapid currents did not let drift-ice accumulate, and the high cliffs of ice prevented the water from flooding far over the sides. The channel was then free, the way easy, and Tamarak full of hope.

ON THE DANGEROUS ICE

They landed on the other side on a snow plain behind which snow hills rose at a distance of about half a mile. Tamarak was in high spirits. The fact that the snow hills were so near raised his hopes that he would find rich hunting grounds for animals with fur. Therefore he had the koburuks pulled up on the ice, and began to make a way in front with them empty. This went very well for a time, and his expectations

that the snow would be firm and undisturbed seemed likely to be confirmed; but as they drew nearer to the snow hills the men with the koburuks began to sink into the snow and slush up to their ankles, then to their knees, and finally up to their thighs, and they could only get their feet out of the wet mush of snow with great difficulty. The dogs were all right; they were light, and the snow carried them, but the koburuks kept sinking down, and as they sank into the snow water oozed out in all directions. When he saw that Tamarak gave the order to stop, and he sent the Eskimos back to the north-west waterway to fetch the snow-shoes which had been left in the sledges. The Eskimos returned, fixed the snow-shoes on their feet, and returned quickly to where Tamarak was, without falling through. He and his friends also put the snow-shoes on, and so they moved on until they had dragged the koburuks as far as the snow hills, which were about seventy yards high. There the snow was firm again. Then they unharnessed the dogs, and set out back to the waterway, by the same route, to fetch the sledges. They trampled the places down hard with their snow-shoes where the water had oozed up, hoping in this way to get through to the snow hills with half a load at a time, where two koburuks were already in safety. Having reached the channel they loaded only half of the provisions on the sledges and started off again, but when they came to the fatal spot they began to sink in again. Tamarak therefore was compelled to go back half a mile to the channel, and fetch the baskets. They got to the sledges, emptied half of the

load on to the snow, and placed the baskets underneath; then they travelled quite well. This convinced Tamarak that without the baskets he would never have crossed that little snow plain at all.

With the sledges they got as far as the koburuks, unloaded, and set off back again to the channel to fetch the remaining half of the load; and only at the end of all that was the whole party at the foot of the snow hills. By then it was after eleven o'clock at night; at midnight the tide came, and on the spot where the sledges had recently been standing water stood a yard deep, and had they been just an hour later they would have lost half of their supplies. They would have had to return to Ivanov, and give up their part of the expedition, or perish. But Tamarak was clever enough to learn by experience, and he saw that on the way back he would have to go much farther north to avoid such treacherous places. His party was again on firm snow. But in spite of that he decided only to move at night, when even soft snow is frozen hard, while during the day they would sleep, and thus they would move easily forward over a good surface. After a short conference with Ochut Tamarak decided to take eight sledges and go due west along the snow hills, and then round them, while Ochut with the rest of the party was to go through the pass which cut into the hills. They were to meet on the other side of the hills, and so they would get to know the region thoroughly, and would see from the tracks in the snow how plentiful the animals were.

Very well. Ochut found a way into the snow hills, and proceeded along the pass, while Tamarak disappeared towards the west. Soon, however, Ochut discovered that the pass came to an end, and then he did not know which way to turn. Should he go northwest, where the hills led, or due north? He did not want to loiter about long there in the hills, because he had already caught sight on the northern side of a large open plain of firm ice. He stood there for quite a time with the Eskimos, and asked them what he ought to do. At last the Indian Kataak said:

"You promised your father to go over the hills, and along the other side until you meet him. We ought then to go on along the snow hills to meet Tamarak instead of waiting here for two or three days to freeze on the ice."

Ochut agreed, and so they went along the snow hills.

They had not gone far when the two Eskimos who were looking for the way, and prodding the snow with little pointed sticks, to test how firm the snow was, suddenly called out. One of them turned round, ran like the wind, and shouted:

"Maiaaiaa kutloch isokutloch aach!—I have found tracks of human beings!"

The other stood still on that spot as if turned to wood, and just shouted and waved his hands.

"Samaiaaiaa chutuch chut!—Wait, I am coming," answered Ochut.

He urged on the dogs, hurried up, and very soon he was there. He put his hand up to his head, not being able to believe his own eyes. Silently he made up his mind that some tiny people must have been walking there, because the tracks were so faint.

"But they must be men!" he declared.

Then the Eskimos were so overjoyed with their discovery that they all, Ochut included, caught one another's hands, and began to dance on the spot, and praised their gods for being allowed to make such a discovery. They went cautiously on, so as not to destroy the tracks, but after they had gone about fifty yards the tracks began to disappear, because the wind had blown fresh snow over them. Then the Eskimos became very sad, for their excitement had waned; but Ochut tried to cheer them up, saying that he had not lost heart himself, the real joy was still to come.

They went on, and looked carefully, but they could not find anything more, the tracks had disappeared. Ochut went back to the sledges and unharnessed two dogs which just before the expedition set out had been trained for tracking. He brought the dogs to the tracks they had found first, but the animals were too young, and did not understand what he wanted them to do. Then Ochut himself began to frown; he did not know what to do next. He stood and thought; then he turned to his comrades:

"Boys," he said, "we can't do anything here just now, but some men must run to my father. They can take all the dogs we have here, so that they can get on as

fast as possible, and they must tell him that we have found tracks of human beings, but we lost them because they are buried under the snow, and we have no trained dogs. He ought to let us have the best dog he has got in his team."

Two Eskimos were ready at once. They harnessed all the dogs which Ochut possessed, and like lightning they started back through the pass through which they had come, and disappeared in the hills, to get back to the spot where Tamarak had parted with Ochut, and then to follow the captain's tracks. In the meantime Ochut put up the tent over the equipment unloaded from the sledges; then they lit the stove, sat down, smoked, and cooked a meal.

The two Eskimos made the dogs go at a terrible speed. Soon they had passed the spot where the party first set out, and then they followed the tracks of Tamarak's sledges towards the west, as fast as they could. They had not to go far before in the distance they caught sight of Tamarak's party. The whole lot had sunk so deeply in the snow that they could hardly struggle out. They were just hesitating and trying to decide whether they ought to try to go round the hills along the same awful route, or to give up, return by the way they had come, and set out through the pass after Ochut. When Tamarak heard of the strange tracks he quickly made up his mind to return. Ochut's dogs helped to pull his sledges out of the snow, then they all set off back at a great pace, and in a happy mood, because all the dogs were harnessed to only half the load. They turned into the pass between the hills,

and then they proceeded with very great care so as not to destroy any tracks. At last they found the tracks which Ochut had seen, and shortly after that they reached Ochut himself. Ochut in the meantime had got the meal ready; he shared the food out among Tamarak's exhausted men; they all sat round the little stove at the foot of the slope, and Ochut gave a full account of what he had seen. Although Tamarak was chafing with eagerness to get to the bottom of the mystery as soon as possible, they decided that they ought to rest first, because they were all so completely exhausted. So they all slept till five o'clock in the morning. Then Tamarak picked out two castrated wolves which he had bought on the Mackenzie from the local Indians. They had excellent noses and were well trained. They threw themselves on the tracks, running about over the snow followed by the Eskimos, and in less than ten minutes they had gone over half a mile, turned into another pass, and climbed a bit higher, as if on a beaten track.

When Tamarak and Ochut looked closer they saw that there really was a tiny path, covered lightly with snow. New tracks began to appear, and then on the top they led to some holes in the snow. As it led up from the small ice-lake the path was so narrow that a full-grown man could hardly walk along it. It was quite impossible to get there with dogs and sledges, and so Tamarak decided to leave the dogs, koburuks, and provisions below, with a few men to guard them. Before they set out, they had a long conference to decide what to do if no one crawled back out of the

holes, for they did not know whether they were dealing with men or animals. Nobody believed that men could live here; some said that the tracks were like those of small forest bears, for the track of a forest bear is something like the footprints of a man wearing maklaks.

THE INHABITANTS OF THE EXTREME NORTH

At last they climbed cautiously up the path until they reached a small snow platform where they collected, and carefully watched the holes. Nobody went in or out, nothing appeared, and except for the tracks there was no sign of life.

Again they stood perplexed. Were the creatures animals or human beings? The holes were about sixteen inches in diameter, which is very small for human beings. They sat down on the canvas, lit their pipes, and waited. They had been waiting for a long time, one or two hours perhaps, and Tamarak, who kept glancing at the chronometer, was already impatient; it was nearly nine o'clock, and still nobody appeared, so he got up and said:

"Boys, get up; after all, how many of us are there here?"

He counted twenty-three men.

"Well then. There are four holes, six men to a hole, and for the last four and myself. Get to the holes, but nobody must begin before I give the word."

So the Eskimos placed themselves in front of the holes and sniffed cautiously. There was a faint odour

of fish oil, and in whispers they agreed that it must come from Eskimos, and not from animals.

The excitement grew. Tamarak announced that if nothing appeared before noon they should all start dancing, shouting, and clapping their hands, and perhaps they might be lucky enough to draw the mysterious people out. Twelve o'clock came, but nobody appeared.

"All right, if they don't come out, they don't," said Tamarak. "All together!"

They all got together and began to dance and roar. They roared so loud that they could have been heard miles away, but nobody appeared.

Tamarak waited for another twenty minutes; he was beginning to feel bored, so he said:

"Boys, there can't be anyone here, even if they were deaf they would respond to our shouting, and stick their heads out."

"Perhaps," said Ochut, "the people are frightened; they may think we are wild animals, and so they don't come out."

Tamarak suggested that they should wait a few minutes longer, and if still nobody appeared they were to start shooting. A few minutes passed; Tamarak told them to stand and point the guns so as not to wound anyone at the holes, but to shoot into the air. They took up their positions and began to shoot until the earth shook. One minute, two, five, ten, fifteen minutes, passed; the guns went on banging, and Tamarak scratched his head, for nobody had appeared.

Twenty-five minutes passed. In one hole something began to move, and a strange creature came into view.

It was a man; a tiny pigmy; a little man with slanting eyes; he was trying to sneak out and pop down into the next hole. But the Eskimos bunched together and blocked his way; the pigmy then tried to get back, but even there he was cut off, and Tamarak went up to him, put his hand on his shoulder, smiled, and said:

"Don't be afraid. Me friend! We friends! We will protect you! You friend!"

He spoke to him like this; then the little man suddenly opened his mouth, and in a thin, high, singing voice he began to say:

"Ki-ri-kirii, ku-rii-kii, ku-ki, rii-rii."

Something like that it was they said.

"Well, that I can't understand," said Tamarak to Ochut. "Boys, which of you can tell what he says?"

Of course nobody could. Then Tamarak, seeing that the little man was terribly frightened, pointed to the Eskimos, and tried to reassure him. The pigmy was quite frantic. He was trembling all over, he had certainly never seen other men before. Tamarak kept on soothing him, and told the Eskimos to put their arms away. Then they stood round in a circle and began to clap their hands, and dance. At that the little man began to cry, and Tamarak looked on wondering why he was crying, but as he looked closer he saw that really the pigmy was laughing; his face was all screwed up with it. They all stood there for several minutes: the Eskimos kept on skipping, and Tamarak asked the tiny Eskimo what they had got in the holes.

Most of Tamarak's Eskimos were civilized, for they

had spent many years on whalers and been as far as America and Japan. As soon as an Eskimo earns any money he buys lots of things which he fancies, even if they are quite useless, so that often at home they have very strange collections. Anything they care for they usually cart about with them. So Tamarak asked the Eskimos to show the little man their most attractive things, and offer them to him to see if he would bring something out of his hole in return. They pulled various trinkets out of their pockets, anything they valued, and showed them to him, flourishing them in front of him. The pigmy looked at them but did not move. At last they showed him their furs. Then he placed his finger on his nose, and they realized that the strange man was really an Eskimo, because in some tribes this action indicates that a man is interested in and pleased with the object. They stood with him for some time longer, and then they let him go.

"Boys," said Tamarak, "don't keep him here any longer; let him go; perhaps he will bring his family, and we shall see what kind of people they are, and if we can we will take something of theirs back home with us. But if we can't we must not do them any harm. We will let them stay here, and later we will come on another expedition, and then we shall be able to stay with them for a time, and when they have got to know us we will take them with us."

He was very anxious to find out whether the customs of these inhabitants of the extreme North were Indian or Eskimo.

The little man disappeared down the hole, and he did not come back again for a quarter of an hour. He was alone. He peeped out, and disappeared again. Tamarak was on tenterhooks.

"We will wait here till three o'clock, and if he doesn't come, we will cook the supper; I shall stay here, and watch to find out if anyone comes out or returns home from hunting."

While they were talking the little man crawled out of the hole, and behind him were his wife and four children. They were all dressed in Eskimo fashion, entirely in furs. The pieces were sewn together, but it was clear that in making them they took the whole skin and did not cut it any more to get it into shape. Four of five furs made a legging. They had sleeves to their coats, but no hoods. They had tapering heads. They wore fur gloves on their hands, but in contrast to those of the Eskimos the gloves had no thumbs. The Eskimos also noticed at once that the method of sewing was a bit different with them. They sewed as we tie shoe laces.

Tamarak now tried to make various signs to the little man, and with gesticulations he tried to make love to the woman. He wanted to know what kind of women there were in this tribe, for Indian and Eskimo women are just crazy after men. But he saw that she did not respond to his advances at all; she did not understand, and did not know what he wanted. Instead, she hid behind the man, and just stood gaping there. She was almost a head smaller than her tiny husband. Tamarak kept on talking and talking, at the same

time taking note of all the differences between them. The woman was quite a different creature from her husband. She had very slanting eyes, sloping down towards the nose, the little man a bit less. She was rounder; they both had hair only on the top of the head; they were broad across the temples, and their mouths extended from one ear to the other. Their noses were short and squashed flat. The woman was so ugly that Tamarak swore that no one in the world could fall in love with such an unattractive creature.

He then went to the other hole, and pointed down it. The little man repeated his strange crowing, but nobody came out. On the other hand, two children went along the small path towards the ice-lake, and there they began to catch fish with their hands, and soon they had a nice pile.

Tamarak surveyed the country with his telescope; he looked for more places where there might be holes, and he looked for smoke, for it seemed strange to him that he could not smell any smoke in the holes. He wondered whether these strange creatures used fire at all, or whether they were living there like animals in their holes. While he was looking round like this, the problem was solved in another way: one of the children came running back from the lake and the little man took a fish in his hands, held it by the tail and fins, and began to eat along its back. So Tamarak realized that these people probably did not cook at all, and ate everything raw like God's creatures, because they did not know how to make fire.

Soon after that they all came out of the holes. There were four families. They did not talk, they merely made a kind of subdued crowing noise. Tamarak was so interested that he stayed there till eleven o'clock at night. The Eskimos showed the pigmies their equipment, and then the pigmies brought up theirs from the holes. They had bone utensils, thread made of skin, needles for sewing, but nothing for cooking. Tamarak showed them pots, and offered to give them some, but they obviously did not know what they were for, and they did not want them. He struck a match, and their eyes stuck out in amazement. He had the paraffin stove with him, so he had it brought up, lit it, and pumped it up so that it burned well. The pigmies were overwhelmed with astonishment; one of them touched it with his finger, and he jumped away terrified.

But Tamarak could not stay very long; they all had a big journey in front of them which only just allowed them to get through in time to the small plain, at 83° 63′ N., where the rendezvous was to be in August. So with a heavy heart Tamarak decided to set out on the march again. Finally he showed them his compass, and they, of course, did not know in the least what it was for. They were, however, no longer frightened; they even went with Tamarak down to the koburuks and tents, and then as far as the ice, pointing out in which direction he ought to go over the plain.

Tamarak followed their advice, and met with no great difficulties. He went on towards the north-west, keeping the north-west waterway several miles away

on his right towards the east. In this way, catching animals as they advanced, in three weeks they reached 86° 27′ N., where they came across another waterway which was quite a narrow channel. They crossed this quite easily, and moved along the other bank until a huge iceberg in the distance marked the beginning of the big plain on which we were camped. . . .

We made Tamarak tell the incredible story of his expedition again and again. We decided to call the unknown people which he had discovered the Koburujuks. We wondered what kind of people they really were. On the whole the Polar men decided that they must be the last remnants of some Eskimo tribe of which there had been rumours in the North for a very long time. Everyone had thought that far in the North there was an unknown tribe, but nobody knew where. Had the remnants of that tribe at last been discovered? What an eternal pity that Tamarak could only fix the latitude to the nearest minute! His estimation of their locality cannot therefore be fixed within several miles, which in a maze of ice channels, icebergs, snow hills, and lakes means a good deal. But he described the position of the snow hills, and the north-west waterway, at the spot where he crossed, so minutely, that a good Polar leader with a well equipped party would be able to find it again. Many nights lying on my bed I dreamed of the fame which the man would receive who led the expedition which would bring into civilized countries those strange people, living as they did, summer and winter alike, in holes in the snow, without fire, and on the same level as seals, walruses, and Polar

bears! Sometimes I could not believe it, and at others my faith in Tamarak returned again.

For the whole of the next and the following days we talked of nothing else but of these strange people, but we began to grow anxious about Ak-Mook's party, of which up to then we had had no news. Had anything happened to them?

AN AMAZING ECLIPSE OF THE SUN, AND THE STRANGE INVERSION OF THE UNIVERSE

But these exciting things were suddenly overshaded by an event which I shall never forget even if I live for a thousand years. It was one evening, getting on for eleven o'clock, as we sat and talked, for nobody wanted to sleep. We suddenly saw the blue sky begin to redden in a very peculiar manner. We looked and rubbed our eyes, asking one another what it was, for perhaps our eyes were deceiving us. No, we all saw the same. A strange light was enveloping everything; even the white men looked like Indians. Captain Ivanov shook his head and said:

"Damn it all, boys, we are in for something now! Look how red everything is. I bet my life we shall have an eclipse of the sun!"

"An eclipse!" shouted the Eskimos and the Polar men. Some of them had seen an eclipse of the sun before, and they all talked about it, saying that it was terribly bad and dangerous. But those who never before had seen anything like it in their lives waited with curiosity and anxiety to see what was going to

happen. For myself I had once seen an eclipse of the sun when I went with an astronomical expedition to northern Alaska; but then it was cloudy, and we saw nothing peculiar but a sudden darkness. Here, however, I was to witness a terrible event which raised the hair on my head.

So we stood there; it was eleven o'clock, and it began to get darker and darker; it grew dusk, red like blood. As it darkened more and more the fiery colour of the sky deepened—and then suddenly we all cried out, for we saw the fire in the sun was actually moving. We fixed our eyes on the sun, and heard the voice of Captain Ivanov say:

"Didn't I say so? Be careful, boys, now it will come! I once saw an eclipse on the eighty-sixth degree, but it was as much as I could stand, I wonder what it will be like to-day!"

As we stood there gigantic flames were flashing round the sun; one minute, two minutes, five minutes passed, and it kept getting darker and darker, and we became more and more apprehensive. The dogs howled in terror, and threw themselves about in their harness.

It was now ten past eleven; we suddenly saw fire streaming out from the sun: it flew faster and faster, and in a moment it was as if a circle of ghastly flaming tongues began to flash on all sides, fiery tails flickered here and there, and we thought the terrible hour of death was approaching. This took about twenty seconds. In that time all the heat had gone from the sun, and of a disk at other times so dazzling bright nothing was left but a dark circle enclosed in a luminous

ring. The sun had been put out. And in the middle of the dark circle we saw, not believing our eyes, hills, huge rocks, volcanoes, and craters, with lava flowing in all directions. As the lava reached the edge of the sun it flared up in a tremendous blaze, which flashed in all directions, and streamed out as if gigantic snakes were flinging themselves into the universe. We trembled with fear, and none of us could utter a word. We looked at one another; we all were red like blood, the ice was a pool of blood, and for miles around us the icebergs looked as if blood was streaming from their tops and sides.

Slowly, by degrees, the fire began to work its way back into the sun, and those fiery snakes returned. Nobody on earth will believe it, and nobody on earth can imagine what it was like.

As time went on the fire slowly returned again into the sun. We felt like breathing freely again, when suddenly we saw that we were standing upside down. The sky was below us. Above, where the sky had been before, there were icebergs hanging upside down; terrific ridges threatened to tear themselves off and fall on top of us. We saw in the sky a network of channels and ice-lakes. The whole world was topsy-turvy, as if someone had just caught hold of the globe, and one, two, three! had turned it upside down. We were standing with our feet on the dome of the sky, and were hanging from it heads downwards. I groaned as I crawled on my hands and knees to the sledge, caught hold, and sat down on it, holding my head in my hands, because I was so dreadfully dizzy. Several

of our men felt sick, and vomited. At the same time we saw that far beyond the sun, like a black snake, some unknown continent was visible.

"Mirage! Mirage!" shouted Ivanov. "Do you see that black strip behind? That must be the reflection of some other land on the other side of the Pole! It must be the north of Greenland! We are near Greenland, and we have come to it from the west!"

Mirage! Well, so this was the famous mirage! I had heard of it several times before, but not till then had it caught me on the ice: a phenomenon which many Polar men know of; a strange reflection, which they say, produces an illusion like this.

For several minutes we sat holding our heads. We looked at the icebergs; they hung motionless, they would have crushed the whole world if they had torn themselves off.

"If that falls, few of us will ever see Figurina again!" an Eskimo moaned.

"Don't be afraid, that will soon change," replied Ivanov.

It did really! In a short time the sun shone again with all its gold, and very quickly everything was in order once more. The icebergs were in their proper place, and glistened as usual in the sunshine. But we had hardly recovered enough to begin to talk about that amazing experience when towards three o'clock a tremendous snow-storm began. We could not understand how it came, for the sky was beautifully clear, not a single little cloud was floating in the air, the sun burned with its hot golden rays, but snow came

rushing in all directions. It came from the west, and in about five minutes we were almost completely buried. Fortunately it was not thick, it was light as feathers; in a short time it passed away, and we threw ourselves on the oars of the koburuks, and struggled through the snow to the sledges and the dogs, to prevent them from suffocating. And as we were buried like that in the soft snow, all you could hear was cheerful shouting and laughter. We were all in a heap together without being able to see each other, we only knocked against one another. The storm, however, died down very soon, and the sun began to scorch so much that in the short time before we had time to get through to the dogs we could see how quickly the snow was melting. It melted so fast that by about five o'clock we all stood in water up to our knees. Fortunately we had our foodstuffs well wrapped up in canvas, so that the water did not get to them. We all had wet feet, our maklaks were soaked like sponges. As quickly as we could we pulled up the sledges and the dogs on to the hillocks of ice.

AFTER AK-MOOK

But only then it struck us that Ak-Mook's party had not returned. We were very worried. Had they perished in that terrible eclipse? Had they been crushed to death by an iceberg which tore itself away in the horrible moment when the world was upside down? But the leaders laughed at our fears, they assured us that in reality the icebergs had not been hanging from

the sky; they sat nicely below, only our eyes had deceived us. Ak-Mook's men could not have perished in that way. They gave orders to set out north, so that we could still do some hunting in that part of the world, instead of fruitlessly waiting on the spot. So for the next five days we made short trips in all directions.

Anyone who has not been above the eighty-sixth degree cannot imagine what it is like there. The horizon is somehow lifted up in a strange manner so that it seems as if you were walking on the bottom of a huge wash-basin. There are few channels there, they are twenty-five to thirty miles apart, and the widest is only about half a mile across. What it looks like still further north I can't say. I never got any farther.

Well, then, we hunted there for five days; some were already upset because we should be late in getting to the boat. Ivanov announced that anyone who wanted to could go on ahead, but must wait at the cross channel, he himself could not return, for either he had to wait there with his party until Ak-Mook turned up, or he would have to go to find him. With this they all agreed, and no one went on ahead.

But Ak-Mook still did not appear. It already seemed very strange to us, something must certainly have happened. Since Ak-Mook had sworn, before he set out, that he would cross the eighty-seventh degree, we were afraid that he might have met his end somewhere in those unknown regions. But because we knew more or less which way he intended to go, in his

desire to get so far north, we sent a small party in support. Three Eskimos got over the hillocks on the plain as far as 86° 83′ N. There they found a channel running from north to south; they were afraid to go any further north, and they did not want to cross the channel. They climbed up on an ice hillock there, about a quarter of an hour away from the channel, so that the water could not get at them, and they looked in all directions. They then tied two sledges together, and fixed them up on the hillock, so that they were visible a long distance away. Then they began to shoot off rockets of powder and sand, which made a very loud report. In that Polar stillness they could be heard miles away, and so they kept on shooting.

Then towards evening they saw on the channel a small kayak with a man in it, an Eskimo. He was rowing towards them very slowly, and it was obvious that he was at the end of his strength. He landed, pulled out the kayak, and staggered forwards. They ran to meet him.

"Na Anko! Na Anko!" the Eskimos kept shouting as they gathered round him.

Was this Na Anko? His fingers were frozen to the bone; on some the nails were missing; his face was a mass of blood and chilblains. He sat down, smiled, and waved the hand. The Eskimos waited for what he was going to say.

"Na Anko, where have you been?"

"Kagiaan got drowned," answered Na Anko. "Has Ak-Mook been here? Where is he?"

"Kagiaan got drowned? And you don't know where Ak-Mook is? What happened?"

Na Anko stood up:

"We must go after Ak-Mook. He is waiting for me on the other side, on the eighty-seventh degree."

They tried to persuade him; they roared into his ears not to be so mad, but to rest, and they would set out after Ak-Mook the following day.

He gave in, lay down in the koburuk, and in a few moments he was snoring. Then the next day the supporting party set out bravely across the channel with Na Anko at its head.

They wandered on the other side for two days, shooting off rockets, until at last they thought they could hear firing in the distance, again and again. They hurried in that direction, and suddenly in front of them they saw a tent with a barrier of seals and walruses round it. Captain Ak-Mook ran to meet them.

"Where is Na Anko?" he shouted. "And where is Kagiaan? We have been waiting here for them."

"Na Anko is here!" they answered as they drew near, "and Kagiaan is drowned."

"What are you doing here Ak-Mook?" asked Na Anko.

"What should I be doing here? I am waiting for you. Kagiaan got drowned did you say?"

"You were waiting here," Na Anko answered, "and I in the meantime have been several miles further south, on the other side of the channel. I reached eighty-seven seventeen. Kagiaan got drowned."

Silence fell on everyone. Then Na Anko's friends began to caper round their comrade. These people do not think of the dead long.

"Now we are going to meet Ivanov," said Ak-Mook.

They pulled down the tent, and set out as fast as they could to join Ivanov's party, each trying to get there first.

Then suddenly we heard in our camp that they were coming; we ran to meet them, and already we heard them shouting:

"Na Anko reached eighty-seven point seventeen! Na Anko reached eighty-seven point seventeen!"

A terrific roar was our answer. We all danced on the ice, even the old beardy captains behaved like lunatics, for a whole hour the sky resounded with our shouting:

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

"Haiaa! Haiaa! Haiaa! Haiaa!" roared the Eskimos until they were hoarse, and until they could only whistle, hiss and wheeze in their throats. Na Anko was surrounded and enveloped in the tumult. An hour later when our enthusiasm had cooled down more, we formed a big circle, and listened to the stories of Ak-Mook and Na Anko.

NA ANKO'S MAD FEAT, AND KAGIAAN'S DEATH

From the beginning Ak-Mook led the party with great skill and met with no serious difficulties until they reached the eighty-seventh degree. In front of them a range of icebergs stretched out far towards the north; they were separated from it by dangerous barriers of

smaller ice formations, wild ramparts, channels, snow hills, flooded plains, and unknown lakes. There the struggle began in rivalry between Ak-Mook and Na Anko. Ak-Mook hesitated; that famous Arctic leader, who in his forty years had been twenty times at least over the Frozen Sea, did not know his bearings beyond the eighty-seventh degree, and he was overawed by the dangerous and unexplored region lying in front of him, conscious as he was of all its perils.

He hesitated.

He scrutinized what lay before him through his telescope; he looked north towards the snow mountains, where there might be game, and searched carefully for a route which would take them to the heights on the horizon. Realizing that at last they had reached a spot where further progress was almost impossible he gave the word to make camp.

"What's the matter?" asked Na Anko. "Why are we stopping?"

"We can't get any further just now. We must examine the surface and try to find a way to those snow mountains." Saying this Ak-Mook waved his hand towards the north.

"Why stop to examine the country when we can go on? In my opinion we ought not to waste time to no purpose. Let's either go on or back, but not stop. The summer is short!"

Ak-Mook was responsible for the party. He was not keen on leading it to the next world, as was only natural. But Na Anko knew that their leader's courage was failing as he moved beyond the eighty-seventh degree,

and that he did not know the country. He, therefore, looked carefully himself to find the easiest way to the snow mountains. He saw that from the west a side channel ran towards the mountains. It would therefore be best to hold to the west of the line they had been taking, get to the channel, and, by means of the tide, sail in the koburuks as far as possible towards the hills.

He explained to Ak-Mook what he had discovered, but the leader stroked his chin; that was the most difficult, and risky way, they would perish to a man, and according to him it would be best first to explore the way straight over the ice to the mountains, and set out with the whole party afterwards.

But in Na Anko's opinion Ak-Mook's idea was the silliest that ever had got into anybody's head in those high latitudes, for time and trouble would be needed to survey that ill-chosen route, while along his they would be spared all that because the tide would do it for them.

But Ak-Mook stuck to his opinion.

"Very well, if you daren't go with the whole party, I shall go alone!" Na Anko declared, and he got ready to start at once.

Ak-Mook again tried to convince him that his project was quite mad, and that it was much better and safer to go over the ice, but Na Anko would not be deterred, and was now ready.

"Look here," he said, "you go over the ice, I shall go round, along that channel. We will meet on the mountains. I only want to know who will be there first; I think that it will be me."

"All right!" Ak-Mook agreed, "but if we don't meet there, for you will certainly die on the way, we will meet here in any case in two days' time. We need not wait longer, it will be certain that you are not coming back. Think it over."

Na Anko said good-bye, and was just setting off when his friend Kagiaan, who was at the rear, came with his team. He asked what it was all about. Na Anko explained to him what a coward Ak-Mook was, and how frightened he was to go any farther; they were going to see who would be first at the snow mountains.

Then Kagiaan said that he would go as well.

That was soon over; Na Anko and Kagiaan threw their kayaks on their backs and started.

They went towards the north-west, and came to the channel running from north to south—it was the same channel as the one beside which the support party set up the mark on the hillock of ice—the two then sat in their kayaks, and let themselves be carried north by the strong tide. In this way they soon did about twenty-five miles, but suddenly the channel came to an end, and the water poured over the ice. However, to the right, towards the north-east, another channel branched out, so the two friends crossed over and sailed on for a distance of some miles.

In the middle of the channel, however, there was a huge iceberg sticking out, leaving channels at the sides, only eighty feet wide, through which the water poured. Na Anko, a fine expert for dealing with such situations, knew that he must hold out towards the right, for the strong current would take him round the

iceberg, and carry him clear. He shouted back to Kagiaan to be careful, that his life was at stake; there was a dreadful whirlpool; and he must stick to the right bank. Because of the rush of water Kagiaan probably never heard. Na Anko, heading for the perilous breakers, glanced back for a moment and saw Kagiaan making for the left. There he was caught in the whirlpool, thrown against the vertical face of the iceberg, and disappeared below the surface. Na Anko dare not hesitate, or turn back, and give way to sorrow; he knew that Kagiaan's last hour had come. In any case it was impossible for him to turn back; the rush of water carried his boat forward like a dart, and in a moment he was right beyond the iceberg and again in a wider channel, on which he sailed still further north. About five miles beyond the iceberg the channel came to an abrupt end, and the water poured out far and wide over the ice plain, carrying Na Anko's kayak with it. The Eskimo pulled his small boat out of the water, he knew he could not get any further, and that he would have to wait for the ebb tide to take him back again. He was not dressed warmly enough, for he did not expect that it would be so cold there, so he ran about in the dusk, jumped, and stamped to get warm.

Then he had a strange sensation, for the ice seemed to prick through his maklaks. He switched on his lamp and looked at the ground. He saw that he was standing on a queer object, which seemed to be made of brass with sharp points, and which had been partly molten. He realized at once that he has standing on a

gigantic meteor which had buried itself in the ice, or perhaps in the earth, in a spot where the sea was shallow with a thin crust of ice. He noticed that round about for many miles the ice crust had cracks in it. He would have liked to take a bit of the meteor back with him as a proof of what he had discovered, but its surface was extremely hard, like yellow brass. Then he knew that he had found the biggest meteor that had ever been seen in the North, and he wondered if it was not the one that everyone had talked about so much. They had all seen its fearful passage through the sky, which it cut with a tremendous blaze until it was extinguished, and was followed by a terrifying thunder which was heard over all the Polar seas.

But it was now three o'clock in the afternoon, and the tide was turning. He was horribly frozen, and in his exhaustion he was losing control of his fingers. But he fixed his position, and found that he was 87° 17′ N. He was disappointed because he had not reached the eighty-eighth degree, or the snow-mountains; but even then he had got further north than any of the Eskimos, or of the white Polar settlers, on the New Siberian Islands. He carried his kayak to the water, jumped into it, and let himself be swept back by the ebb tide. Again he had to pass the iceberg sticking up in the channel; again he had cautiously to steer his kayak past the spot where his friend had perished, of whom, of course, there was now no trace. Now the whirlpool swirled in the opposite direction. Luckily he got through safely, and soon he was in the wide channel along which he allowed himself to be

carried south. Chilled to the bone, and only half conscious, he saw at last the signal on the hillock to the west of the channel; there he landed and found the supporting party.

In the meantime, while Na Anko was having such adventures, Ak-Mook made his way cautiously north, and only got to 87° 7′. Those of Na Anko's friends who had stayed with Ak-Mook tried to get further still, and nearer to the snow mountains. Kutjok reached 87° 12′, Aklak 87° 9′, Took 87° 11′, Achaatj 87° 13′, and Makluk the same. They could not get any farther, as Na Anko had expected. Nevertheless, next to Na Anko's record those spots were the farthest north that Ivanov's expedition ever reached. Afterwards they returned to the original rendezvous at the eighty-seventh degree, and waited for Na Anko for two days longer than they had agreed on, until they had begun to think that he must have perished. That was how Na Anko came across the supporting party first, and with them he went to find Ak-Mook.

The members of the expedition were so enthusiastic over Na Anko's achievement that they were all anxious to load the heroic Eskimo with gifts. Captain MacDonald promised him fifty thousand dollars in kind; a sum which was duly paid as soon as they arrived back on the New Siberian Islands.

HOME

On the way back, when our boat called at Figurina, the first island, and Na Anko's native place, I stayed for

five days as a guest with his family. They were civilized Eskimos; his father was a pure-blooded Polar Eskimo, old and blind, but his son looked after him as best he could, and saw that he did not suffer in any way. In their cave these people had tables, chairs, and even cupboards. Na Anko himself could read and write. I saw that their kitchen was better than that of many white Polar men; they cooked meat and fish, and they drank coffee with sugar, tea, and cocoa; there was no smell at all, everything was unusually clean. I whispered to Na Anko that I was astonished at the order and cleanliness. He replied that if there was any dirt or a smell he would not live there. In contact with white people he had got used to cleanliness. He went with many people on hunting, exploring, and pleasure trips towards the Far North, and so he helped to introduce the habits of white people even into those forsaken regions. In fact, in this respect Na Anko was superior to many white Polar men. It was a remarkable fact that there were four big Eskimo families on Figurina, all of which copied Na Anko's habits of cleanliness. On the other hand, the white Polar settlers there were an eternal disgrace to the white race. Filthy as pigs, and never washing all their lives, they lived worse than cattle.

Na Anko was then about twenty-eight years old. Ak-Mook, whose mother was a Russian, and father an Eskimo of the Jurten tribe, was then in his forties. When some years later I left New Siberia they were both still alive; but Tamarak is dead; he died in 1917. He was sixty years old, and they say that his children

were as plentiful as the sand in the sea; and Ochut is still alive.

THE LAST INSTALMENT TO MACDONALD

As I look back and review what I have said about my strange experiences in that amazing part of the world I see that I have told you only a tiny part of the whole story. I know that if I get safely back to New Siberia again, thinking things over in my cave, and going through my log-books, if I still can find them in the old boxes, I shall often sit up with a jerk, and say to myself: "Look here, you forgot this, and that was the best of them all." I can, however, comfort myself with the thought that the handful of reminiscences which I have left with my countrymen in Europe will enable them to learn something of my life and of those of my white and yellow friends. But I must still explain something that happened in the autumn of 1917.

In the last few years my business had not been such a brilliant success; even in the North we learned by degrees that the whole world had got mixed up in a big war, and that everybody was more interested in guns and food than in furs. But in spite of that my name was by then so well known in the North that my business kept growing and growing, and my fortune steadily increased. So when I called that year in Nome, after my big trading expedition, and changed into money the gold and furs which I had obtained in remote solitudes and reservations in exchange for food and utensils which I had taken there, I saw that I had in the bank of the trading company a very nice sum

of money. I spent some time going round the warehouses where they were sorting my furs, and for several days I walked about Nome, and then I went back to the bank and looked at my account.

"Have you got it all in order? Have you made up my account?"

"Here you are. You have a credit of fifty-five thousand dollars."

"All right. Let me have goods for myself for fifteen thousand, and put the rest to the account of MacDonald of New Siberia."

I still owed MacDonald the last instalment of forty thousand. I could not bear to listen any longer while he continually told me not to be in a hurry with the money. Now the money was there, why should it lie in the bank in my name, and not in his? Why should I still have to stand on *Laura's* deck, and keep remembering all the time that she was not mine?

God Almighty! I left the bank! I walked about the town hot and feverish. I spoke to people I did not know. I wanted everyone who had seen that boat lying in the harbour to know that *Laura* belonged to Jan Welzl of New Siberia, and to nobody else.

I had a walk to the harbour; I stood and watched how she rolled there several hundred yards from the shore of the bay. She was mine! All the hardships and sufferings which I had endured were suddenly forgotten and richly rewarded. I was a wealthy and respected man; I had a boat; I had friends who knew what it meant when Arctic Bismarck, the master of that beautiful boat, shook hands with them!

I confess that that evening I stayed a bit longer in the saloon. I could see myself already arriving at New Siberia, running up to MacDonald's cave, and handing him the chit from the bank. I could see the old man grunting, calling me names, and then patting my shoulder. I could see us sitting, talking, and spinning yarns about our checkered and difficult lives.

We took the goods on board and weighed anchor. Once again the blue rocks of my home in the wilderness appeared on the horizon. We landed.

"Hello, boys! Here we are again."

A few Eskimos were standing on the rocky shore, and they helped us to get the goods to land. I walked about and looked round. In the distance I saw an Eskimo coming towards us. It was Captain Ak-Mook. I waved my hand to him, and shouted. He came slowly towards me.

"The death bird sang near your cave a fortnight ago," he said in a low voice.

"What," I whispered, "not MacIvor?"

"No."

"Someone in your family?" I asked sympathetically.

"MacDonald is dead," said Ak-Mook.

I sat down on a boulder, and held my head in my hands. So MacDonald was dead. So many of my friends had died before my eyes in terrible circumstances, but a Polar man's heart is hard, I could never weep. Even then I did not cry, I only sat there in silence.

Suddenly I jumped up, tore my hair, and began to run along the shore.

"I am a fool! I am an old fool!" I shouted.

Ak-Mook looked at me in astonishment.

"What is it?" he said.

"I am the biggest fool in the world!" I shouted in his ear. "The greatest ass that ever walked about the Golden North."

Ak-Mook stood here with a stupid expression on his face. I took him by the shoulder, and exclaimed:

"A fortnight ago I paid to MacDonald in Nome the last forty thousand for *Laura*. Do you understand? The last bit of money he had let me have between ourselves, for which no dog will ever bark. I could have had *Laura* now, and that money into the bargain! I am an ass."

Ak-Mook could only slowly understand. I suddenly saw his face broaden. Soon we were sitting there on the rock, and laughing heartily at the joke that Jan Welzl had paid off his debt to the dead MacDonald, which meant to some relations of his in America, although nobody knew of it now, and MacDonald would never have cared.

Ak-Mook comforted me, it is true, by saying that at any rate I might feel proud because I had acted rightly and honourably; but I still kept tearing my hair, and even *Laura* hardly gave me as much pleasure as she had done before. I was ashamed how stupid I had been, and in my reminiscences at first I did not want to let it out, for people might laugh at me as an old man who had had to drudge hard, and have a thin time in Europe, just to be able to get back north, and yet a few years ago he threw away forty thousand dollars.

Well, well, I am an ass then.

EPILOGUE

Dear friends, I am again going north. At last I have earned enough money for the journey. I got it as a labourer in the docks, as a lecturer, and finally as a writer. In my books there may be various points which are not clear, not complete, or not correct, for unfortunately I don't know enough Czech to be able to describe everything in detail, and to get you to understand about all the things which I wanted to explain. I have not enough money to travel in comfort; I shall sail with a cargo boat to Quebec, and then with a slow train through Canada to Prince Rupert, then by boat to Skagway, by rail to Dawson, and then I shall try to get somehow through the Canadian forests to Herschel Island, and by a whaler to New Siberia, where by now my friends, if they are not dead, must surely be thinking that my old bones are lying somewhere. I have just enough money to take me to Dawson. What will happen after that I don't know. I only know that I must be back in the North, where I shall not die of hunger while my old hands can get me a living. And therefore, if perhaps there is no news of me for years and years, don't think that I have been buried somewhere in the North. I shall be sitting in my cave, smoking my pipe, and telling the Eskimos about the things which I have seen while with you in Europe.

And just as you would not believe me when I told you about even the most ordinary things in the North, they will shake their heads, and quietly whisper: "Arctic Bismarck is pulling our legs."

Good-bye, friends!